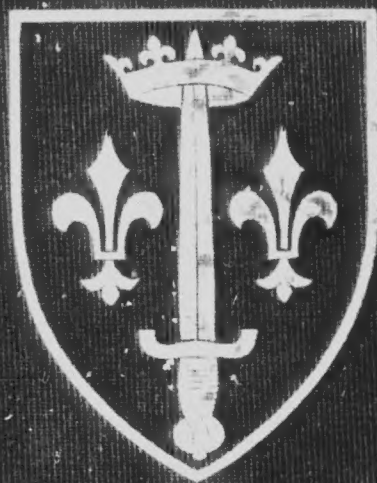


MADemoisELLE CELESTE



ADELE FERGUSON KNIGHT

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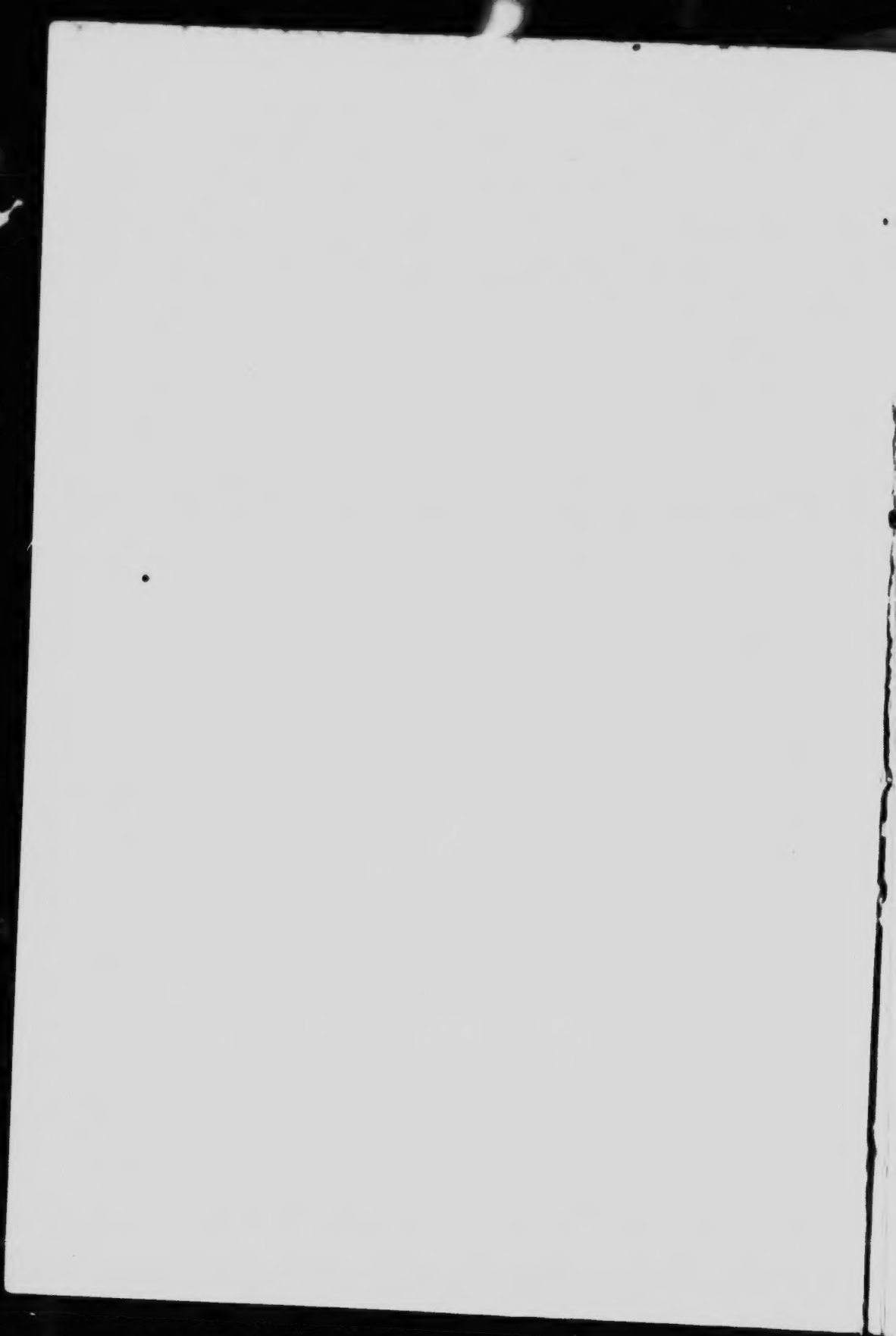
Frank

With the Season's Greetings
From Uncle, Aunt &
Cousin Leonora

Xmas 1910.



MADemoiselle CELESTE





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ROMANCE OF
THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

By
ADEL F. FERGUSON KNIGHT

Translated by GEORGE F. LINTON



ADJUSTED
MUSCH & SONS COMPANY
NEW YORK



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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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Frontispiece by CLARENCE F. UNDERWOOD



TORONTO
MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

P. 21. 21
11. 21.
1. 21.
2. 21.

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GEORGE W. JACOBS AND COMPANY
Published April, 1910

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*To my most indulgent critic
My Mother
I lovingly dedicate this book*



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Mademoiselle Celeste

CHAPTER I

IN THE RUE POULET

It was growing dusk on that last day of March, 1794, with gusts of wind that swooped around corners to clutch at the skirts of those returning from the mockery of justice in the Place de la Concorde. The sun was going down behind a mass of gray smother, as if it sought to hide its face from the things it had seen that day.

But the groups gathering in the Rue Poulet saw nothing of the sun or its departure, so intent were they upon living over again, conversationally, the awful tragedy of the past hours.

"And did you see how the *ci-devant* count and his woman, who called themselves De Lavarolle, went hand in hand until the guards separated them at the last moment? Ah, it was a brave sight, and how she followed him up the steps, her head high and not a quiver! Ah, they die game, these aristos!"

"What's that? De Lavarolle gone? And I not there to see?" cried a voice in one of the darkening doorways, and a figure leaped into the street. His face, in the glare of the single street lantern, was pale and unhealthy, and his black hair fell in unkempt locks above his protruding

eyes. The neck of his blouse was open, showing cord-like muscles that moved when he talked, and he used his hands, themselves overlarge and with thick, knotted fingers, in extravagant gesticulation. At his exclamation the group parted to admit him.

"How? Policon not there?" some one demanded, incredulous.

"No, for Brouillon, who is eye and hand for the Green-Eyed One, gave me other tasks," and Policon's chuckle conveyed a shuddering promise of evil. At the sound, one of the listeners, a young woman, drew back and caught up the child clinging to her skirts. Policon turned upon her with a scowl and a snarl.

"So? Sympathy for the aristos, eh? And the days of hunger and cold are so far away that they are forgotten? Do you want the child there to starve as you have starved? Have you forgotten that you would be in a mansion as fine as their own if the accursed ones had not stolen from you and your father every sou you could earn? Do you love this place so much,"—and his outspread hands included the whole alley,—“that you wish to linger here and wring your food from the very stones of the gutter? Will you have your child slave as you, and your mother before you, slaved daily, that the aristos may ride in their laces and jewels and fling not so much as a crust of bread to those who die for want of it?”

He thrust his face suddenly close to her own and his big, bony hands were flung wide in a passion of eloquence. The woman drew back another step and her arms tightened on the child.

"No, no, oh, no!" she murmured, scarcely above a whisper.

"Cry then with me, 'Down with the aristos!'" he ordered savagely.

She repeated the words in half-dumb terror and he laughed to see her fear.

"Eh, citizens, Policon does not forget, you see," he cried, turning to the others. "Policon remembers well when this same *ci-devant* Count de Lavarolle struck me—me—Policon, with his whip—eh, my God! across the face!" He raised his clenched fists high, swearing horrible oaths. "And does any ask why Policon swore that day that 'he blow must be wiped out with blood? And to-day La Guillotine received the toll, they tell me, and Policon was not there to see!" He lifted his face toward the place, unseen beyond the housetops, where his red-armed divinity stood. "And Jacques Brouillon is another who does not forget," he continued. Then, as if adapting his remarks to the ignorance of his hearers, he cried loudly, "Is it any wonder that he loathes the aristos with the venom of a good citizen?"

"What is his grievance?" inquired one of the men in answer to Policon's evident invitation.

"Eh, but it is a story I love to tell, for who could listen and ever after spare an aristo? He stood in the road one day, up there in the north, a little lad at play, and the carriage of the *ci-devant* Duc du Marsillac came whirling around a turn. Brouillon, the little child, was frightened and knew not where to fly. The outriders rode him down, down—ah, merciful saints! Rode him down like a clod, like a bit of carrion! And you know he drags his leg to this day."

"Heartless, heartless!" cried another woman, and looked at the one who had earlier drawn Policon's atten-

tion. "Fling your little François to the aristos, and see how you'd like it, Mathielde!" she advised with a tigerish look.

"No, no, no," whispered the mother again.

"And did the citizen-count do nothing for the boy?" inquired one of the listeners.

"Oh, yes, such as it was. He stopped his carriage and he took up the boy and he carried him to his own chateau, and the leech of the place cared for him. And when the boy began again to go about, the citizen-duke invited him to serve in his house, to come at his call, paying him in return with shelter and food and the lessons that the boy craved most. And at length the aristocrat made of the boy a notary, and gave him care of his great estates: could he do less when he had shortened his leg for him? And when the ferment began in the provinces the boy, grown to a man, was equipped to fight the aristos with their own weapons; brains, aye, brains that had been trained to match their own! Then came the great Convention and Brouillon was sent, a deputy. Since then you know what he has been, the secret agent of the Jacobins and now of the Great Green-Eyed One himself, who sees, as we know, even in the dark. And Brouillon, in his rising, has honored Policon, for who can serve better in spying upon the suspects, or so nimbly as Policon? Policon serves Brouillon; Brouillon serves Robespierre; and Robespierre serves La Belle France! So simple and so complete. *Vive La Guillotine!*"

The cry rose loud and shrill in the closing dusk, and was echoed instantly by other groups, as if each dared not be slow in repeating that cry, however ignorant of its present use.

figure and his eyes beneath his cap flashing with the alertness of suspicion.

At the third house from the corner he was walking steadily forward; at the fourth house he had disappeared. The very second, however, that the next step had ceased the shutter of a garret window was cautiously opened and Policon's head was thrust out.

"Eh—so! The citizen-soldier stops at the house of Mathilde Crozi, eh? Now, what's to do? What's to do? She showed a softness I did not like to-night: what means that with now the soldier? Jacques Brouillon will find a way to make full amends, and meantime Policon will not sleep with his eyes shut."

He drew in his head and closed the shutter with utmost precaution, not the sound of so much as a falling feather in its latching.

But the soldier, with reason to be quite as alert as the spy, had been standing meantime in the shadow of the doorway and had observed fully the head in the garret window and, though beyond reach of the muttered words, he had no difficulty in presupposing their import. He waited another moment after the shutter had closed before he ventured to drum softly on the panel of the door before him with the cushion of his finger. After a long interval the door opened noiselessly, and in the darkness beyond he could faintly distinguish a woman's figure. He stepped in and in an instant, still with that tragic caution, she had closed the door and had drawn him into a room at the right of the small hall. Here a candle was burning, and after a quick inspection of the place to make sure no prying eyes or ears were near, she lifted the candlestick and beckoned the soldier to follow.

For a moment he detained her, however, with a hand dropped on her arm.

"He came then, to-day?" he murmured.

She nodded, as if not daring to trust her voice.

"No one saw him? You are perfectly sure?"

She cast a glance into the shadows beyond the candle that her hand shaded.

"No one saw him, though the very stones here have eyes and ears but not hearts," she whispered in return.

"But who is this brute who calls himself Policon?" he demanded as if prompted by her answer.

Her frightened eyes met his and he paled perceptibly, so contagious was her fear. "Hush! Do not speak his name aloud. He is the very talons of Brouillon, the Limping Spy. Policon did not see you enter here?" with quick suspicion.

"The street was quite deserted as I came down," he returned evasively, and heard her breath lengthen in relief. "But I must see the stranger; be quick," and he followed the woman into the drafty entry and up the bare, creaking stairs, the candle, still shaded by her trembling hand, drawing grotesque portraits of them both on the blackened wall.

At the first turn she silently indicated a door and stood aside to let him pass. He dropped a coin into her hand and then drummed softly upon this door as he had upon the lower one.

"Who's there?" demanded a voice within.

"Franz. Open quickly," murmured the soldier, and at once a bolt slipped back. The next instant he had leaped within and had himself shot the bolt, as if dreading a second's delay. Then, turning, still with that furious

haste in his manner, he glanced about the noisome, fetid room, its single window tightly shuttered. A candle guttered in its socket on a rickety table, and a dirty sack, stuffed with straw, lay on the floor, crowding two stools for space. The table, he observed, held also a cut loaf and a bottle of cheap wine, such as they sold for a few centimes in the *quartier*, and it was evident, from the crumbs and litter, that the occupant of the room had recently dined.

In a breath the eyes of the soldier had come back to this lodger, a tall man nearing thirty, whose head was carried in an unconscious imperiousness above the lace ruffles of his cravat. The close-fitting breeches above the top-boots showed limbs muscular and active, and the dark green coat covered a pair of broad shoulders. But it was the eyes under the square forehead that proclaimed the real man, for the light that shone in them held no flicker, and it seemed to the newcomer as if the spirit of a steadfast, unconquerable security lived in those depths. He felt again, as he had always felt in dealing with this man, that here was one upon whom other men must lean.

"Ah, Victor, you have come!" he cried, and his relief was like that of a child who catches a friendly hand in the dark. The two clasped hands, holding one another fast a moment, before the host dragged his cloak from one of the stools, and offered it with a gesture of invitation that proclaimed, without speech, a visitor who knew little of the Rue Poulet and its customs.

Seated, the friends faced one another across the wobbly table, each unconsciously testing the other. Neither smiled, and for a short moment neither spoke. The air

was full of an ominous hesitation, which neither, seemingly, cared to break.

At his entrance the soldier, opening his cloak, had cast a clumsily wrapped bundle upon the bed, and he indicated it now with a look.

"There is the uniform," he said. "It can hardly fit, I suppose, but it was the best I could obtain."

"Then it will do," returned the other quietly, as if with the words he had dismissed all uncertainty. "Did you bring the passports?"

"No, for there was a crowd in the alley as I came through the first time, and I dared not come up here then. I gave them to Louis, fearing that perhaps my second coming might arouse suspicion and I might be taken. He will wait with the carriage at the corner of the first side street, and if I do not win through you may perhaps succeed, but of course, in any case, it would be too late to transfer the passports."

The host nodded. "That was a wise precaution," he said, "and it may mean success to-morrow. Louis told me the particulars of the plan this afternoon, and I understand that I am to stand by to take up the duty if you either are detected or fall. I do not need to tell you that I am quite ready—for anything?"

The officer nodded.

"I know no one in all the world upon whom I could count with such certainty," he said. "In all this wretched business my one fear was that you might not reach here in time, never once did I harbor a doubt of your friendship or your willingness."

A slight pause fell, broken by the elder who looked up suddenly to say: "No one saw you come in to-night?"

The officers of the Guard cannot usually frequent such a den as this."

"Yes, I was seen, and there is every reason to believe that I may be followed as I go out, for a frog-faced fellow named Policon, a tool of Brouillon's, had his head out of his attic window the instant I had gained the doorway. Of course there is always the hope that it was mere coincidence, but you will need all your wits here, Victor."

"What Brouillon is that?" inquired the other quickly.

"Jacques Brouillon, a well-known face in the Place de la Concorde, the Limping Spy, they call him," cried the officer with sudden bitterness. "It was through him, I understand, that the count and countess were arrested, and with them, of course, mademoiselle. His name spells loathing for me, and I fear him as one shrinks from a snake: he strikes always in the dark and like a flash of envenomed lightning."

"Um-m. Brouillon, Jacques Brouillon, you say? A small, dark man who drags his leg?" inquired the stranger.

"Exactly. You know him then?"

"Too well."

"But what do you know? Is it anything that can intimidate him? Any weapon we might use?"

"No, although I know nothing of him that is not evil. It's a long story, my dear Franz, and I cannot tell it to-night, time is too short. Tell me instead if anything has been changed in your plan for to-morrow? Louis explained the scheme fully, but each moment may bring complications that might upset every calculation. You have prepared your soldiers for transfers to come from

other companies, to prepare the way for my presence among them? And your fellow officers do not suspect?"

A shadow settled in the eyes of the soldier and his clenched hand fell on the table.

"No, for how could they suspect a traitor in their midst? Oh, Victor, if you could but guess the struggle this has meant to me!"

"Struggle?" repeated the other, puzzled.

"Yes, for to-day I am just as loyal a Republican as I was three years ago when I laid aside rank, and home, and sweetheart, everything I held most dear, to devote myself body and soul to the cause of the downtrodden and oppressed."

"But what has that to do with this plan for to-morrow?" persisted the other with a frown.

"Everything, for to-night I am not alone the soldier, but the lover as well, and I am torn between the two," and he dropped his head on his crossed arms.

His friend watched him a moment quietly but with a certain baffled curiosity. To him this division of interests was incomprehensible, an unknown country through which he had never passed. The straight road of his own life he had followed undeviatingly, with scant thought for possible branches and by-paths. Any desired goal to him might mean hard, rough riding, but it had ever been straight away, over, or through, but never around, obstacles. Therefore he found himself now out of touch with his friend's pain, and he made what he knew must be an unsuccessful attempt at comfort.

"We are all human, whatever politics we espouse, and it would be more than a man could exact of himself to

see the woman he loved suffer death and lift no hand to her rescue."

The other raised his head swiftly. "Yes, yes, I know all that. I have told myself just that a thousand times; and yet, until to-day, my honor has been as clean as any girl's. Never before has a De Beaurepeau played traitor for any cause."

The one called Victor drew away in a quick impatience. "Is it the custom of the De Beaurepeaus to hand a woman over to a maddened mob?" he inquired. "The present exigency is new, and requires a new mental adjustment to meet it. Under the circumstances, it hardly seems a fitting time for question or hesitation."

"Ah, Victor, you are so hard! You are cruel only because you do not understand. I am not hesitating, heaven forbid! I am but tasting despair, and it burns my tongue. I know you cannot sympathize, because you do not believe in the rights of the people as I believe, and I am a fool to look for it in you. To-morrow brings for me either death or disgrace—I pray heaven it be death!—for I have succeeded in having it arranged that the prisoners shall be in my care, and I will be the officer whom the people entrust with what they consider their own. If I survive the struggle at the guillotine, I will be forever smirched by treachery to them and to the Corps."

The second man moved restlessly in his place and his shadow wavered as he drew back again and squared his shoulders. "My dear Franz, all this must be very trying, but I cannot see how it changes in any way the need for action to-morrow."

The faint hint of impatient scorn in the voice touched

the hearer sharply and he too sat straighter as he answered :

" You are quite right, Victor. You always had the ability to see with such clearness. Of course we must think only of Mademoiselle de Lavarolle. They tell me that she fancies, poor child, that I am willing to let her meet death without lifting a hand to save her. She does not know that I turned heaven and earth to save her parents to-day, but there was a hidden opposition somewhere that I could not overcome nor locate. My only chance to save her was to submit apparently to the dictates of the Tribunal. But when they mounted the steps yesterday my heart seemed to stop beating. I was on duty hoping to be able to show some touch of comfort at the last—oh ! " he covered his face for a moment with his hands. Then, as if spurred by the pressing need for haste now, he added : " It proved beyond all doubt that nothing now can save Celeste but this confusion to-morrow at the very last moment. Everything is planned ; not a soul can guess save you and Louis and I, and—I pray God that He will be kind and will let me die saving her ! "

Again that flitting impatience in the eyes of the listener, and he leaned his arms on the table to say earnestly :

" I do not understand. You talk of leaving her to struggle through the world alone, deprived of father and mother and lover, all in a few hours ! I cannot see how you can fail to pray God with all your strength to keep you in your place. "

" No, you do not comprehend, as you say, for although I have loved her as long as I can remember, and although we were betrothed as children, the day that I joined the

Guard she told me that she never wanted to see my face again, and that any bond that had ever been between us was broken. I tried to convince her that when duty, as I saw it, called, I had no choice but to obey, but she would not listen. She is as savagely intolerant an aristocrat as any that ever drew breath, bred to it from her birth, of course. A patriot who wears the tricolor is for her a thing forever accursed. Ah, but even in her wrath she is so royal, so sincere, so incomparable! You have never seen her?"

"Never. How shall I know her to-morrow? Has she been told?"

"No, for there was no sure way to reach her. I will point her out by some sign and afterward—ah, Victor, my very soul will be your slave in all time to come if you will save her! It may be that I can get away in the confusion, but I hardly see how."

"It seems extremely unwise to try, for as an officer you will be recognized and, if caught, your head will fall as well as her own, and fruitlessly, for its falling can help her not at all. If, on the other hand, I go and we are captured, you will still be here to use your influence for her second escape."

"That surely seems best, I admit; though I shall die by inches until I can follow, if I live, and claim her in England. Three days ago I caught a glimpse of her in the prison and since then all the old love that I thought had been crushed has risen in new flame. I will give her into your keeping because I know that I can trust your cleverness and faithfulness even beyond my own. Promise me, my friend, that you will see her safe in England if God gives you breath to breathe."

Victor stretched his hand across the table and clasped the one Franz offered. "You may count upon me to the uttermost of my powers," he said gravely, adding, with a certain sober pride: "We have a fondness for being trusted, you know, we men of ——"

"Hush, hush! Mathielde tells me that the very walls have ears," whispered De Beaurepeau, starting up. "I'm sure I heard a noise."

Again that soft tap repeated at the door and Mathielde's voice in an agony of fear.

"Quick! Policon has gone out, hurrying fast. If he finds either of you here—my God! I am lost, lost!"

Instantly both men were muffled in their cloaks, and Victor pushed the soldier into the passage.

"You first, Franz. Get away while there is time, for another might be substituted in your place over to-morrow's prisoners. I'll fall into the ranks at your left at the last moment. Now, you have three minutes' start and then I'll go in the opposite direction."

A quick glance down the silent alley, and Franz de Beaurepeau had stepped into its embrace. The other, listening, heard his steps die away, heard Mathielde's frightened cleaning and sweeping up-stairs, and then, with a little smile and a nod of confidence, as one who takes up a waiting task, he too left the house and was lost in the darkness.

CHAPTER II

TREASON! TREASON!

A NEW morning now, and again the spectacle of the crowded tumbrils leaving the prisons on their way to the Place de la Concorde. Four wagons comprised the present train, and the men and women standing in them, helpless with their tied hands, were jolted and shaken over the rough pavement, to the no small entertainment of the rabble gathered to watch them pass.

But the way was not long, and now the first of the tumbrils, turning into the square, drew a clamorous cry from those who awaited their coming, the bloodthirsty cry.

"Ah ha! They come! The tyrants, the aristos! Make way! Let them kiss the knees of the dear Lady Guillotine, the only aristo the people love. She will avenge our wrongs. Equality or death!"

At the hoarse cry a young girl in the last car lifted her head, as if she would match with her single, imperious will the voice of a whole nation in arms. She dropped her bound hands on the rough rail to keep her feet, her poise a distinct challenge, while soft strands of red-brown hair fluttered across her face. Very straight she stood, in spite of the lurching wagon floor beneath her feet, and her neck and arms, guiltless of wrap, showed softly pink where the cold nipped them. She still wore the white house-gown in which she had gone to prison and it fell in

long, classic lines from the short waist. Very like a statuette after Flaxman, but with centuries of pride ironed into that young face.

She had spoken no word throughout the short journey from the Conciergerie, but her eyes had searched one guardsman after another along the whole route, quite as if she expected to find a familiar face among them, but with neither hopefulness nor a happy anticipation in her own, merely the expectancy of one who, knowing the presence of a friend to be near, looks for him searchingly in a crowd.

The first tumbril stopped, having reached its destination, and that shout of exultation rose again and was taken up by those who crowded about the other carts in turn.

But one of the rabble shouted loudest, and he moved from cart to cart, searching every face with wolfish look until he came to where the girl stood in the fourth tumbril, still too busy with her search, or too indifferent to his presence, to heed him. At once he stopped, forcing his way close to the place she held in the tumbril, and as he climbed upon the wheel the girl let her gaze fall upon his venomous face with its loose-lipped mouth and protruding, toad-like eyes, which, standing close now, he lifted toward her own. Compared to this dreadful being the mob seemed to her at the moment to become clean and wholesome, yet she looked into that face with no hesitation in the dark depths of her eyes. Meeting that look the man's face changed suddenly, and the mouth opened in a grin of triumph.

"The citizeness rides gaily to her bridal," he observed. "Will she find the ceremony a joy, I wonder?"

Mademoiselle's face expressed no change whatever, plainly too proud to so much as move her eyes when he occupied the spot where she had chosen to fix her gaze. The man's vicious grin broadened.

"Ah ha! But it is evident that the citizeness fears to look upon her bridegroom. Is he not beautiful, that straight, tall bridegroom, with his waiting arms and his sword in his teeth? Will the citizeness forget a little of her grandeur then? Ah, how close he will hold her fair body!"

His outflung arm challenged her attention, and the girl knew in advance what she should see when she turned her eyes. Yet, without haste, with a composure unruffled and deliberate, she drew her eyes from his and turned them toward the platform where two parallel lines rose black against the blue sky. Even as she looked the thing quivered, something flashed in the sunlight, and the crowd about its base broke into hoarse cheers.

The girl stood motionless for the briefest part of time, then she returned to a perfectly dispassionate survey of the man below her. He climbed closer, as if in nearness he might yet move her to betray a fear.

"Well, well; didn't see?" he demanded tauntingly.

"I am not blind," she returned, coldly, not aware that she had let the words pass.

"But a head fell at that drop, a head as beautiful as thine own perhaps. Soon, soon, it will be thy turn, and what then?"

"Why should I desire life in a world that holds such as thou?" She was definitely conscious now of speech, and experienced a faint surprise to discover that she had been beguiled into answering. She had never wasted

voice on one of the *canaille* before, and she groped dimly now for a reason for this lapse. Was it part of the new order of things, when men and women forgot their pride? Had she, too, been tainted with the fever of freedom and equality, that she should thus hold converse with a wretch of the streets?

The man laughed loudly, exultingly; he had forced her to speak. "See, see; they are dragging out the aristos from the second cart. Another moment, and thou wilt follow, pretty morsel. How the knife will grate on thy proud, white neck! Listen, and I'll cry thy funeral knell, for I'll stand close and will call *bon voyage* gaily, gaily! The place thou art going to is a bit hot for us poor fellows, and I may never have the pleasure of meeting thee again. Only the aristos can dance on those coals. Ha! Here comes the guard. Now 'tis indeed thy turn. And remember that thy father struck me once across the face, just once, citizeness! He and his woman died for the blow yesterday and now thou shalt march after them to pay the same debt. Down with the tyrants! Fraternity or death!"

The coming of the guards released her from his voice, as he was hustled and pushed aside. The girl took a deep breath, as she turned with her companions to face the officer in charge and his little troop. A faint moan passed her lips as she did so, and a motherly, white-haired woman beside her took her hand.

"Courage, my daughter. It will be over in a minute. Let the people see that the nobility of France can die as serenely as they have lived. They can but take our bodies, our souls are out of their power. God holds them fast. Into His hands commend thy spirit and into thine own hands take thy courage."

The girl smiled faintly. "It is not fear, madame," she explained, turning to the new friend. "One who used to be my lover is in the press, and I cried out when I saw him, forgetting. That was all, but I thank you."

"Ah, poor heart! Surely they will let you have time to speak with him, if you ask," said the motherly woman pitifully. But instantly the girl's pale face had flashed into passion.

"Speak to him? He has become a National Guard, a traitor to every friend, every tie that ever held him. What words could a De Lavarolle find for one who serves the *canaille* in their hideous crimes?"

The soldiers were assisting the prisoners to alight. The white-haired aristo was lifted down and the officer reached out helping hands to Celeste de Lavarolle, but though his eyes looked into her own, they showed no hint of previous acquaintance or knowledge. It occurred to her that these eyes had turned to stone, so wholly expressionless they seemed. She drew away a step from the uplifted hands but they caught and lifted her down.

"Hush! Not a glance. Walk before me and listen," he whispered hastily. "When I cry 'Treason' slip through the crowd—a coach—the first side street—do not hesitate—do not speak."

She did not look at him again. She held out her hands mutely, that he might examine the bonds to make sure they were fast, then she turned with the others as the little company filed toward the platform. Close behind the prisoners marched the officer Franz de Beaurepeau, with another, taller, soldier at his side; and behind them the crowd closed in.

The procession had reached the corner: would he——?

The girl listened, her very soul in her downcast eyes. Step by step, it was almost passed. Ah! Franz's voice at last, loud and full:

"Treason! Citizens, treason! Who struck at an officer of the Guard? Treason!"

He turned instantly, and with his men began to strike about him, somewhat blindly, right and left.

"The Guard to the rescue! The Guard! The Guard!"

Other soldiers came running, and the crowd pushed and swayed, striving in a panic of terror to escape those flashing blades. For a single second Celeste de Lavarolle turned toward him; then, with fierce realization, she began to fight her way toward the street he had indicated. The press was horrible. Oaths, cries, curses, everywhere. The close proximity of the mob sickened her. From time to time she staggered, but she pushed on. The crushing bodies were not so close now—the edge of the crowd was but a step away—a few more breaths—ah! A loathsome face looked into her own and a voice rang exultingly.

"Not so fast, my beauty; thy bridegroom is still waiting yonder and I'll see thee safe to his arms."

The frog-faced man was breathless, but he found voice to laugh shrilly and to lay his hand upon her shoulder. She made a terrible effort and cast off his hand, darting a step away from him. He sprang toward her again, his face contorted with fear lest she escape him.

"Ah, you would——!" But swiftly, as if from heaven, a sword flashed and with a smothered cry he dropped beside her.

She looked up, half blind with the shock of relief, but she saw in place of Franz the face of a stranger, of the

soldier who had marched beside Franz, and now his sword was dripping red.

"Come," he said, and gripping her arm he drew her instantly free of the press of fighting furies. Down the side street empty except for a coach at the curb, they ran, and into this carriage he flung her, waiting for not so much as a word to the man on the box.

He was beside her before it seemed that muscles could act and had slammed the door. Instantly the horses had fallen into a gallop and they were away. The coach rocked around corners, rattled over the rough pavement, turning and twisting until it seemed to the girl within that a madman held the reins.

Regaining her breath, she tried to sit erect, but the swaying of the vehicle tossed her roughly about. She grasped the faded satin padding, but her fingers slipped and were loosened. In another moment she was thrown with some force against the silent figure at her side who had not offered a single sound. His muteness struck her as ominous. When another corner and another perilous curve of the vehicle sent her to the floor the man seemed to become suddenly aware of her presence. He put out an arm and drew her to the seat beside him, but as he still offered neither excuse nor comforting question, mademoiselle's eye flashed.

"Monsieur is insolent," she said quickly.

His surprise was so evident that mademoiselle condescended to explain.

"A noble of France cannot accept favors from a jailer. Monsieur wears the hated dress of the National Guard, and a De Lavarolle has reason to despise it."

The man drew back but he did not look at her.

"Mademoiselle's desire will be remembered," he said quietly.

The coach rattled ever on and on, and mademoiselle continued to be banged and pounded against the cushions and once again she fell to her knees, knocking her head sharply against the frame of the coach, but the man beside her remained passively inert. His heavier bulk kept him better in place, and after a few moments he became again apparently unconscious that he had any companion in the vehicle.

Mademoiselle dragged herself painfully back to her place, with a quick side glance at her companion. Then, as if the words forced themselves beyond her restraining will, she said :

"Where are you taking me?"

No answer, and she turned to look at him directly. The same fixed grimness of jaw was there that she had recognized in the horror and tumult of the moment when he had dragged her from the frog-faced man, the same straightness in the figure, and the eyes that gazed fixedly out of the window were watchful, watchful, as if he were probing the stones for some secret they withheld. Mademoiselle felt a faint hope warm her veins.

"If monsieur will prepare me for what I have to expect I may be able to meet it with less blundering," she told him.

"We are nearing the Porte St. Martin," he said without turning, "and if we pass that safely we may begin to hope."

But at that very moment the driver pulled up his horses and her taciturn companion flung open the door to lean out.

"Well? Well?" she heard him demand with quick impatience.

"The Barricade has its full guard," came the muffled reply, "and they must have learned of the rioting and are prepared. We cannot get through. Shall I try at St. Denis?"

A moment's eloquent pause.

"No, for that would mean time lost and a surer chance that the guard there would have been warned. The soldiers here must have seen us, and we cannot hesitate now. The Count de Beaurepeau gave you the passports? Yes? Give them here. These are right. Drive forward at a fair pace, neither too fast nor hesitatingly. Refer all questions to me. Remember that you picked us up as a fare on the other side of the city."

He attempted to draw in his head but the driver's question stopped him.

"But if they refuse to let us pass?"

The other paused with frowning brows, his foot on the coach step, as if he contemplated taking the reins himself. Second thought prevailed, however, and he added with quickened decision:

"The gate is open: ride them down. Over everything, you understand, for our horses are fresh and all the guard yonder are on foot. As for bullets, they often go wide and it will take them some moments to recover from the surprise before they can mount. Any cost, you understand, but don't make a move unless I give the word. We must win through by our wits, if we can," and he snapped the door shut.

When the horses were under way again the stranger

turned to mademoiselle and looked at her with the cool regard of one who measures another's chances and courage. He lost some of this calm when his glance reached the hands in her lap. "Ah, why did you not speak? I had forgotten that they were tied."

He cut the bonds quickly, casting the frayed pieces into the street.

"And you have no hat, no wrap. It will look suspicious." He held out to her his soldier's cap. "Take this," he said, as if it admitted of no refusal, "and I'll give you my coat. It will be easy then to explain that we have been waylaid and robbed, and——"

She met his glance with a flash of defiance. "The guards cannot be such fools," she said.

"Put it on," he ordered quietly by way of reply.

She refused with a gesture.

"Safety demands it. Be quick," he persisted.

Her eyes, turned again to his, were as resolute as his own. "I will wear nothing that has ever served the people," she cried bitterly, "the *canaille*, the destroyers, who yesterday took wantonly the lives of my father and mother. Life is not so dear to me that I am willing to stoop as low as that to save it."

The instant response of comprehension flared into his face, torch-like in its illumination; he replaced his cap upon his own head without a word, forbearing to point out the inconsistency of her position, her present escape having been due wholly to the corps she despised. On the contrary, he seemed to accept her decision as both sufficient and final, and busied himself at once with the examination of the passports.

"These call for Henri Mariot and his wife, Camille," he

told her, reading aloud. "Of course answer without hesitation when your name is called."

"Who are these people?" she inquired. "Are we to hide behind so-called patriots?"

"These people are just you and I," he returned imperturbably, his eyes still on the paper. "Franz de Beaurepeau doubtless knew them and arranged with them for lending us their names."

"But why do we tell lies?" she persisted.

"That we may survive a few more hours," he explained, with a half smile in spite of his impatience.

"No, I will not, I will not! Why should I forget or deny my name, the only thing I have left in all the world? What does mere life hold when every soul I have ever loved is dead? What are a few miserable years to be spent alone, in wretchedness and sorrow?"

He turned his face away from her and toward the window, quite as if he looked casually out upon a city at peace. "It must be as you will," he said quietly, "though it might be well to consider that this is the subterfuge De Beaurepeau planned and these are the passports he risked his life to secure for us." Then, after a pause, and as if it had come to him as a commentary rather than a plea, he went on: "Should the authorities have cause to suspect them to be false, of course De Beaurepeau's existence would be quite as short as your own, mademoiselle. Ah—the gate at last."

The coach stopped. The door was opened. "Passports?" said a voice. Mademoiselle turned her head away.

"Citizen Henri Mariot?"

"Here."

"Citizeness Mariot?"

No reply.

The guard waited a second, then put his head into the coach and looked angrily at the averted face. "Can you not answer to your name civilly, citizeness?" he demanded.

Still no reply.

"Speak louder; my wife is somewhat deaf," advised the unknown calmly. "Or perhaps you will take my word for her identity?"

"Citizeness Mariot!" shouted the guard.

Celeste de Lavarolle turned at last. "Can you not see?" she inquired.

"Eh, the citizeness hears at last," and the questioner, somewhat mollified, withdrew his head, to pop it in again immediately, however, for another look at the figure in the corner. "But why does the citizeness travel without wraps?"

"The people tore them from her on the Quai des Tuileries when madame was afoot. They were maddened at some mistake at the executions and seized upon the first one at hand, not understanding that madame was the wife of a National Guard until I went back and explained. Then, of course, they tried to make amends, but the cloak was gone."

"Ah," with sudden eagerness, "one of the men said he heard that there was some disturbance down there and that we might be called out. What caused the trouble?"

"Unfortunately I was not there for long, having gone to secure these passports, as my beloved father died and my mother awaits our coming for the burial. I had arranged to meet madame the citizeness on the Quai but

she was deep in the mob when I arrived and I needed all my wits to free her and to make the dear patriots comprehend. As time pressed we hailed this driver, and here we are."

"And that explains why you travel by coach, citizen-soldier. Fie, it smacks too much of the old régime, this journeying into the country upon any pretext, when Paris needs all her patriots and soldiers at her side. Nevertheless, the people are indulgent to their own, and if you must bury your father they will suffer you to pass, though 'tis well to remember that a good citizen has but one father, France, and the good mother Guillotine, who works daily to save us from the aristos. The passports are satisfactory, citizen."

He returned the papers and closed the door. They drove through the gate and out upon the road without further challenge, where the wind blew keen and cold, and where the horses broke into a trot, and finally, when out of sight from the gate, into a gallop.

Mademoiselle shivered. No word was exchanged for some time between the two, the man sitting with folded arms; the woman half crouching in her corner, cold, and weary, and forlorn.

At length she could control her misery no longer and her trembling aroused her silent companion. He leaned toward her and watched the pitiful shivering for nearly a minute in the same apparently unmoved silence. Then, deliberately, he removed his coat. Without explanation of any kind he drew it about her shaking shoulders, but she cast it off instantly. Quite as a matter of course he replaced it, though the girl again rebelled.

"I told you I would never wear anything that had

been worn by the Guard," she reminded him furiously. "I prefer to die of the cold. Furthermore, there is no one here to be deceived or benefited by the 'ick of changed clothing."

"It appears a great pity that mademoiselle's wishes cannot always be indulged," the man returned, as he put the coat about her for the third time, and fastened it beneath her chin. "Do not resist again," warningly, "for both mademoiselle and I should consider it awkward to ride through the day holding the coat between us. It would result with a victory for force, and we should both deplore such a remedy."

There was a definite pause. "Monsieur is willing to resort to force?"

"Whenever mademoiselle pleases."

She flung herself back into her corner. "If monsieur leaves me no choice, I can but submit to force, as he suggests, but understand I wear the hated thing most rebelliously."

Monsieur bowed gravely and dropped his hands. He even smiled as if inviting her to share his gratification.

"You see, mademoiselle, France forgets sometimes that her children have preferences of their own, and if at present she desires to write safety on the coat of a National Guardsman, neither you nor I can afford to quarrel with her protection or rulings."

"But what guarantee have I that this coat or any other thing may mean protection?" cried the girl swiftly. "Who are you that assume the right to say these things to me? Where are you taking me? You appear to claim some affiliation with the Count de Beaurepeau, who

traitorously deserted his rank and his family and—and others, three years ago, and whose name therefore can carry small assurance to one of those so deserted. And—and you belong to the Guard, the hateful servant of the people! Ah, I do not forget, as you would remind me, that you saved me from that horrible creature at the Guillotine,”—she shivered,—“but how do I know that you are not reserving me for a sadder fate elsewhere? Ah, monsieur, you see I am grown most ungrateful, because I have seen so much.”

For a long time it appeared that the appeal would bear no fruit, but at length he turned, meeting her eyes with a look of confidence in his own.

“Mademoiselle would be quite justified in her questions if she were not aware that I am the friend of De Beaurepeau, who I understand is betrothed to mademoiselle, and therefore, in spite of politics and parties, can have only mademoiselle’s safety at heart. My own name is of no consequence, since I serve mademoiselle solely as the friend of the count, and I am directed to spare no effort to place mademoiselle in safety on English soil. Franz must be my guarantee.”

“Franz?” Mademoiselle’s voice was choked for a moment. “Franz? The one who forgot all human pity, all obligations, all friendship, and the old, happy days; the one who let my father and mother go to their death yesterday without lifting so much as a finger to help them, or to hold back the people he served? You speak of him to me?”

“Mademoiselle mistakes. De Beaurepeau left no possibility untried to save them, he told me so himself. He was maddened to desperation by his failure.”

"Why, then, did he succeed for me?" she retorted quickly.

"Mademoiselle's sufferings have made her unjust and bitter," murmured her companion pityingly.

The girl leaned toward him swiftly, and for a time her suspicion of him was drowned in her anger against his friend. "Has monsieur ever known what it means to trust another to the last breath, and have that other fail? Three years ago I was a girl of seventeen who believed that all days were holidays and every friend a lover. Then, the man I held dearest came to tell me that he had joined the enemies of my people, that he was leaving that very day to fight—yes, listen—to fight, if necessary to the death, the so-called oppressors, of whom my father was one. And he went as he said, and my father died yesterday. Could you believe any one ever again?"

Her eyes were holding his with the passion of her remembrance, her lips were parted, awaiting his answer, and each breath came fast, lifting the white gown on her bosom. The man who looked at her had a sudden comprehension of what this tragic loss of faith might mean to one who experienced it, an understanding that surged into his soul and flashed into his face. Here was a woman whose heart beat to no unsteady measure, whose pain was like a concrete thing, palpable, intimate, yet who for very pride had not gone down beneath it.

He had been unable to grasp the apparent vacillation of the enthusiast Franz the night before, because the mental atmosphere was so counter to any he had experienced; but now his heart instantly echoed every throb of the stormy rebellion of this girl. Here was something that was real, that was comprehensible, though its par-

ticular phase was born of her experience, not his own, and her point of view was more strained and biased than his could ever be. He saw that it was as impossible for her to understand the new order of things as for a child to enter into the real tragedy of Lear. A questionable loyalty could mean to her only a sort of Atheism, for to those of the orthodox nobility the king had been only a smaller and lesser god, divinely appointed to administer and interpret the laws to his people, the people who, therefore, had neither right nor reason to question his rulings.

Instinctively he knew that this girl would lay down her life without hesitation for the things she held sacred, but that no lowest depths of her consciousness could harbor a traitor. Blinded from long usage, bigoted because she had never learned to see things beyond her own small, happy world, intolerant because she had never experienced the passions that shake the suffering and the struggling, the whole fabric of her life had collapsed when her lover had answered the call of duty. The social storm that was rocking France became for her a hideous upheaval of established, and hence rightful, customs; a chaos, a flood.

Though he understood in a flash each phase of her past experience, though he felt in listening the shock of her lost faith as only those of similar temperament can understand, yet his man's experience had given him a wider outlook, a more diffused knowledge, the dispassionate point of view. He could share her antagonism while he remembered the arguments of the adversaries; he believed with her in the divine right of kings, but was willing to tolerate a restricted monarchy; more than all, while hold-

ing his own convictions firmly he was willing to allow others an equal privilege.

But now, with mademoiselle's face close to his own with mademoiselle's past indifference swept aside in her unexpected candor, with mademoiselle's own self intoxicating eye and ear and brain, old arguments assumed new force, and he found himself speaking softly as he looked at her.

"Yes, I should believe again," he said. "Perhaps for a while every man would seem to me a traitor, just waiting for a chance to destroy, yet I know that the time would come when I should find some one that I could trust, and I should obey that trust blindly; not because he deserved it, but because it would mean for me a return to the precious things of life."

He stopped, while her parted lips seemed to wait on his words.

"Who are you?" she whispered, without moving those eyes that seemingly had grown too vividly alive in the last moment to be met equally. Abruptly, he turned his face away.

"Mademoiselle, I am a stranger, a stranger who hopes to earn in time your trust. Until that time it is better that I shall be to you only Franz de Beurepeau's friend."

CHAPTER III

AT THE INN DU PEUPLE

To those who suffer there is a solace, temporary but satisfying, that, as a rule, can be had for the taking, providing always that tired nerves are not too tired to relax.

Mademoiselle leaning back in her corner, too proud to push her questioning further, too worn to care very acutely who or what her companion might be, watched the outline of his shoulder and head, silhouetted against the window, until both grew blurred and dim, until finally, warmed by the coat and lulled by a subtle sense of security that was enhanced by the rapidly increasing distance from Paris, she forgot her troubles in a heavy sleep.

It seemed to her that her eyes had hardly closed on the figure that sat so straight, the shirt-sleeves on the folded arms showing broadly white as the glancing sunshine fell upon them, when—she opened her eyes again with a sense of impending alarm to find that night had fallen, and that the motion of the coach had ceased.

She sat up and strove to piece together the ended ends of consciousness. Somewhere in the darkness voices were quick in question and answer, though both were unintelligible, and the cool wind was fanning her face from the swaying, open door. Half hesitatingly at first, then with increasing anxiety, she groped toward the farther corner to make sure what required no sense-evidence to prove: the coach was empty save for herself.

She drew close to the door then, straining eager ears to catch fragments of the talk outside, but the meaningless scraps of speech that reached her only increased her apprehension, and at length, unable longer to endure the suspense, she looked out, though she knew that by so doing her white dress must attract immediate attention, if there were unfriendly eyes to see.

But it was monsieur who saw, and who came at once.

"It is only a delay, mademoiselle," he offered in reply to her unspoken question. "One of the horses has gone lame and we shall have to lead the team to the inn near here, this side Clermont, which is not above a quarter of a mile, I understand from the driver. I had hoped to make Breteuil before morning, with luck and a change of horses at obscure places, but this inn is very well known and we shall have to do what we can. We shall wait over night to avoid arousing suspicion and we can be off in the early morning before many are astir. Just a few moments now and we shall be there."

He made as if he would close the door, but she stopped him with a determined question.

"Does monsieur walk the distance?"

"Every ounce of weight means a pound to the poor beasts," he explained.

Instantly mademoiselle's foot was on the step and, a second later, mademoiselle herself was in the road.

"No, no," he protested, vexed at his slip. "Mademoiselle's weight is absolutely nothing." Then, as she made no reply, he added quickly: "You must not think of leaving the coach. I was cramped from sitting so long. I will get in again before we reach the inn."

Mademoiselle's shoulder was defiant. "Am I less

cramped than monsieur?" she inquired, and her companion, hesitating a moment for new argument, lost the day, for the countess was past him in a flash.

A growl from the driver, however, stopped her as she neared him, and she turned her face toward him, listening intently.

"Ah, my lady, my dear lady! And the thin shoes and the little feet!"

Mademoiselle caught her breath in something like a sob, and she took a second step toward the voice, peering through the dusk.

"Speak again," she ordered.

"Ah, Mademoiselle Celeste, do not delay," he begged. "Minutes are gold—are diamonds—now. Whoa! Up, up! So-o!"

She saw the figure of the driver dimly as he drew the fallen, struggling horse to his feet, saw him bend to buckle anew the traces, speaking meanwhile to urge haste.

"Monsieur here will explain better than I can, but ——"

The girl again breathed that soft little sob.

"Oh, Louis! Why did I not guess it was you!" she cried.

"Yes, yes, my lady, just poor Louis, who served the count your father all his life, and whose heart broke yesterday when——! Ah, do not delay now. Listen to Louis who would give his life for you whenever you like, but who begs you now to save us all! My lady is so brave herself, she will do as monsieur desires? See, the road is soaking wet with the rain, and the wind is like an icicle. Mademoiselle will take the coach again?"

"Yes, yes, Louis, in a moment, but first tell me how you come to be here?"

"The Count de Beaurepeau found me on the street wringing my hands after your ladyship's imprisonment with Monsieur the Count and with Madame the Countess—God rest them both! I had followed you all to Paris, hoping the good God would let me help. The Count Franz planned many rescues, but all failed until to-day. Ah, mademoiselle, we have come thus far safely, but a moment lost now can never come back!"

"Yes, Louis, I'm going, but ——"

The hand of her mysterious conductor fell on her arm and his voice was resolute as he said: "You must enter the coach at once. We have no right to consider now anything save safety."

But his manner was unfortunate. The peril of the moment was lost instantly in the surging De Lavarolle blood that could endure no suggestion of command. The domination of an inferior was insolence. With foot on the step mademoiselle turned.

"Monsieur mistakes. Must, by command of another, is a word unknown to a De Lavarolle."

"Mademoiselle prefers to be carried?" inquired her unfeeling guardian, and as she stepped within the coach, too stunned to reply, she heard the door click, and the horses were in motion.

Mademoiselle's teeth cut her lip, so tightly they crushed it, yet with her hand on the door she hesitated, and after a moment drew slowly back.

"What can one expect of a son of the people? Even poor Louis can teach him deference," but she kept her seat.

The rebellion, however, was still flashing in her eyes when the horses were drawn up once more just short of

a hostelry, whose twinkling lights looked warm and inviting. The soldier entered the vehicle hastily, without a word, and Louis again drove forward.

The rattle of harness and hoofs brought the landlord to the door, a burly man whose white apron covered a round paunch and whose jovial voice even the Terror had not been able to silence.

"Hi! Jacques! François! Travelers!" The shout was answered by a couple of stable lads with lanterns, and the host himself opened the door of the coach, his smile wide and unctuous.

"Welcome to the Inn Du Peuple," he began, but at sight of the man-traveler in his shirt-sleeves his face fell.

"Eh, what's this?" he questioned ruefully, his round eyes taking nevertheless a rapid inventory of the coach and its contents.

Monsieur descended.

"One of the horses went lame a while back, and though we are due at Breteuil to-morrow, it would seem best perhaps to wait until morning here," explained monsieur casually, easily, turning to give his hand to mademoiselle. "A couple of rooms, a good fire and food for ourselves and the horses would seem about right on such a deucedly uncomfortable night as this," he went on. "The rain has turned to a mist, but it is a mist that stings one's face," and, still talking, he drew mademoiselle into the lantern's light.

The round eyes of the host seemed about to pop from his head.

"The—the citizen has with him his citizenship?" he stuttered. "But—but I have no room for a lady, citizen.

And—mon dieu! what's to do?" as the slender figure in its soldier coat started toward the house. "Aristos, by all that's red!" muttered the host and made a feeble effort to intercept the pair.

"Stay a moment, citizen," he implored; but the traveler continued to move toward the house, calling directions to the stable lads, who were already busy with strap and buckle.

"Give them a good bed and a good meal, boys," he suggested, "for there will be a rain of francs by and by if they are fresh and ready for an early start. Come, Camille," and he drew mademoiselle's hand through his arm.

But at the door the host overtook them, and spoke with what was evidently a determined effort to turn them back. He lowered his voice, however, and though he spoke gruffly, he cast a quick glance within as if he did not care to be heard.

"The Inn Du Peuple is no place for aristos," he said. "This house has never been questioned or searched, so zealously have we guarded it and kept all suspects from its doors. The citizen must go farther for his night's lodging."

Monsieur's voice seemed carelessly loud as he looked past the reluctant innkeeper into the warmly lighted room.

"You do wisely, friend, and I rejoice that you have kept the place so well for decent travelers, who, like ourselves, must sleep somewhere. Such fidelity to the public interest should not go unrewarded, and I will see that your name reaches the Committee."

"But—but," sputtered the other, evidently softening,

"but these are hard times, mons—eh, citizen, and my guests do not arrive thus coatless, while madame there —"

"Bravo, my friend, your eyes are wide open at last. You perceive that madame wears the uniform of the Guard? Eh, but a careful man makes a slow host sometimes, though it is always best to consider all corners carefully. Yet, who bears so brave a passport as the coat of a Guardsman, and who would refuse food and lodging to a National Guardsman and his wife? No sane innkeeper would presume to withstand the representative of the people or question his right to enter wheresoever he pleases, eh?"

The rueful host bowed in reluctant surrender.

"To a National Guard whatever I have is his own," he agreed, "but I never saw a woman National Guard before. The will of the people is my will ever, citizen-soldier, and there is one within the house who will solve all mysteries and satisfy the people that Jules Mari is ever ready to serve them to the uttermost," and still bowing, he stood aside to let his resolute guests pass.

It struck monsieur, however, that the mention of the "one within" was with an object, and he wondered if the fat landlord designed it as a warning. There was no time for further parley, however, and they entered the ordinary of the inn, a place of warm-brown rafters, and walls wainscoted breast-high, with a gleam of polished brass from the dresser. On the near side of the fire, whose glow was reflected on panel and wall, though itself was unseen, a high settle cut off other view of the room and deprived those on this side of both heat and light, although candles, swept by the wind from the door, flared

on the tables and in sconces on the wall. A few men sat about at these tables, evidently those who lived in the locality, and from a corner came the roll and click of dice.

After one quick glance about the room, monsieur detained mademoiselle's hand upon his arm with a warning touch, and made straight for the fire and the settle.

"What did that man mean?" she inquired in an undertone. "Did he wish to ——"

But monsieur's arm, tightening suddenly on hers, halted the question. They had turned the end of the settle and now stood in the flood of firelight beyond.

"Ah, citizen, it is a cold night for one so near the spring," remarked monsieur, with a cheerful nod toward a bundle in the corner that had moved a trifle at their approach. "But perhaps the spring has forgotten us this year."

The heap of clothes showed some signs of life, and mademoiselle drew hastily away to the other side of the fire as a pair of small, sharp eyes glittered behind glasses somewhere near the top of the mass.

"The spring is as busy finding her flowers as is the Committee gathering its heads for the baskets, citizen," said a thin, raucous voice, that rasped as it fell. "And some of the greatest heads will fall before the flowers come to full blossom, if all goes well."

It struck mademoiselle that for a moment her companion seemed frozen, so still he stood. But after that moment he spoke easily.

"The Guillotine reaped fast again to-day, they tell me," he offered somewhat carelessly, but he moved so that his body shut off mademoiselle from the bundle in the

corner. "Come, Camille," he went on. "You will soon be warm now, and I want my coat."

She cast one glance into his face that was meant to remind him of her avowed rebellion in submitting to its covering, and she pulled at the fastening, but unsuccessfully, for her fingers were stiff and cold.

"I cannot unfasten it," she complained.

"Let me," and he caught her hands gently a moment before she dragged them from him. "Why, your fingers are half frozen," he cried, and drew a step nearer.

He stood very close now, and tried to telegraph a warning with his eyes; but she refused to lift her own, too absorbed in her consciousness of his nearness, too amazed at its audacity, to look for a deeper meaning. And he in turn, recognizing the spirit that held her arms at her side while she submitted so rebelliously to his touch upon the coat, saw something more than the pale oval of her face, more than the shadows beneath the lowered lashes, more than the damp curls on her forehead and the little trembling mouth with its crimson lips, though of each one of these he was acutely aware. He felt her defiant helplessness that yet depended wholly upon him, for even the smallest necessity; and something stirring within him showed him that she was young, with all the veiled mysteries of unawakened womanhood hiding behind the lids that refused him a glimpse into the depths beyond.

Suddenly his hands, fumbling with the fastenings of the coat they had shared, became unsteady. He noted this with a faint surprise, and while still keenly alert to the exigency of the moment, he attempted to explain the emotion to his reason with more elaboration than logic.

It was due to her unconscious appeal to his natural pity, as anything that is weak and distressed arouses a sense of protection in any observer, man or woman, he argued, forgetting that in the sexes this instinct of protection differs as vastly as the poles are distant from one another, not in intensity or degree, but in the emotion that results. The man never wholly forgets the man in him when he deals with woman; the woman is satisfied in the helpfulness itself when she offers it, just as she finds full reward in the smile of a comforted child.

Yet even bungling fingers could not lengthen a task forever, and after that breathless introspection monsieur took the coat from the girl's shoulders and proceeded to thrust his own arms into the sleeves. Mademoiselle, after a glance at the hated tricolor, a look that did not travel above his breast, turned again to the blaze on the hearth. Her companion, perfectly collected and sociably discursive, held his place between her and the settle, his outstretched hands shielding his face somewhat from the fire.

"St. Louis, but I'm hungry," he announced, as if all within hearing could not fail to be interested in his particular appetite. "What sort of fare do they give you here, citizen? You have stopped here before?"

"Often, and found no cause to complain," returned the voice from the settle, "but then Citizen Mari knows with whom he has to deal and that I am over nice about my food. Perhaps such knowledge awakens good service," and he smiled suggestively.

"Sit down, Camille," advised monsieur after another moment. "You must be faint if you are as starved as I."

Mademoiselle shook her head. The firelight brought

a soft glow to the white cheeks as she stood before it, one small, wet, slippered foot thrust out toward the warmth.

"Sit down, for they will take some time to prepare a supper," again advised monsieur.

"I prefer to stand," with a glance toward the figure in the corner, a look, however, which fully explained her preference. Her companion shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, then, tastes differ," and he flung himself down beside the stranger.

After a breath the voice again issued from the clothes, and this time its cracked treble carried a certain indefinable menace.

"Thou hast a wilful wench yonder, citizen. Perhaps she considers a good bench and the company of an honest patriot too good for her, eh?"

"Hardly, since even the great patriots that France has lifted to her highest places were once plain sons of the people like the rest of us. No, she is weary with having sat so long in the crowd."

"But her air smacks of rebellion and an unwomanly pride, citizen, that is out of date in these times. The birch is an old-fashioned remedy that teaches respect when softer measures fail."

Monsieur laughed with a relish that brought the blood into the cheeks of the woman who listened.

"But, you see, wife-beating is out of fashion," he explained.

"So? Your wife? She seems overyoung, and yet in this age of devoted patriots our maids are often widowed in their teens, I've heard. Nevertheless maid or wife, young or old, she should learn to give obedience when it

is required. The lash may hold her from the arms of La Guillotine by and by, for the proud of heart invariably reach her embrace sooner or later, as you know, citizen. Often a good fisticuff is sufficient."

Mademoiselle flashed upon them both a glance.

"*Canaille*," she murmured through shut teeth.

But now the heap of clothes showed something more than voice. A head and two hands emerged, and two glittering eyes fairly leaped to a study of her face.

"Ah, '*canaille*,' eh? 'Tis the password of the tyrants. Do I smell an aristo, citizen?"

The ferret eyes passed back and forth swiftly between the girl and the man. Monsieur, however, continued to lounge unconcernedly in his corner.

"Hush thy forward tongue, Camille. Sit down, as thou wast bid." Then, as she did not stir, he sat up and spoke with a curious directness.

"Sit down, I said."

Brought by the tone, rather than the words, to a tardy appreciation that the simple attitude of obedience meant more than was evident on the surface, the countess obeyed, though by so doing she was forced to place herself between the two, and near the bathed presence of the stranger, a position, she fancied, that she might have avoided had she been more prompt. If this man suspected her pride it was now too late for monsieur, if he were even so inclined, to spare her the humiliation of that other's reprimand.

When she was seated monsieur once more leaned comfortably in his corner. "Eh, wives are overhasty and thoughtless, at times," he laughed. "It's evident I shall have to hold a tight rein."

The stranger laughed venomously.

"'Shall'? Then this is your wedding journey, citizen? No wonder she squealed when I mentioned the lash," and he continued to chuckle, as if the situation were delightfully amusing. "I wish you joy of your bargain, citizen-soldier. She looks such a soft, young thing, half a child, but she will claw out your eyes if she ever gets the upper hand." He turned, noting each trifle of dress with a look that missed no smallest detail. "All in white and no wrap? One does not often travel in one's wedding finery. You did not rob a prison to feather your nest, friend?" The narrowed eyes twinkled.

Monsieur sat straight. It was evident that if careless ease had failed, blustering might yet serve.

"You ask a member of the National Guard if he has robbed the Lady of the Place de la Concorde?" he cried angrily. "When has a soldier stolen from the people their victim?"

"Forgive the question, citizen-soldier, it was a mere flight of an arrow in the dark. Yet madame looks so—so altogether unlike the women in the Faubourg, St. Antoine, for instance, and she said '*canaille*,' remember; that I can swear."

"She apes only what she has seen, citizen-stranger. She has served as maid in a great house and copies the manners of the aristos, not dreaming of their effrontery. Leave her to me without fear. I shall tame her."

Mademoiselle half rose in her place, too outraged to endure more, but the entrance of the host with supper put an end to the talk and while a lad brought forward a small table and set it before the fire the stranger arose

and went to fetch a chair from beyond the settle. As he moved he limped.

Monsieur bent over mademoiselle. "Eat quickly and without protest. I will explain everything later."

"Without him?" she inquired incredulously.

He paused a fraction to hide her from those glittering eyes now returning. "It is not safe now to hesitate at any length. The man's suspicions may bring instant ruin."

"I cannot swallow a morsel, it would choke me," she explained with a certain proud humility.

He bent forward. "I have reason to know this man. A spy. Mademoiselle is descended from a long line of brave men and women. Is it quite fair to hamper my efforts?"

She paled a trifle, but she rose at once. "I do not wish to be selfish," she said quietly. "Monsieur is at liberty to leave my service at any time. I—I thank monsieur, I—I——"

Suddenly she swayed and would have fallen had he not reached out quick arms. For a breath she lay against his breast, the eyes that she lifted to his disproportionately large in the white face. Seeing the alarm in the face above hers she caught a sob before it had fairly escaped.

"I—I am so tired and—foolish," she whispered. "I have eaten nothing for nearly three days. How could I think of food when I knew that they were going to take my father and mother——?"

"Here, lad, some wine quickly," cried monsieur, as he seated his burden in a corner of the settle.

His voice brought the host again and a couple of other servants and for a few moments there were hurry and con-

fusion in the little enclosure, throughout which the stranger at the table merely looked up with a smile as he continued his meal.

Warmed to new strength by the wine, mademoiselle at length sat up. "Let me go to my room," she begged.

"My wife will take her supper above stairs, landlord," said monsieur at once. "Send some one to light us. I'll return and take my bite here, for she needs rest. The coach was like a ship in a storm for rocking."

"But, Citizen Mari, I understood you had no rooms above stairs?" interrupted the man in black, and his voice held a perceptible suggestion. Thereupon the innkeeper volubly regretted his limited accommodations. He had but one small room on this same floor, for one person only, so that when the citizeness was again restored it would be better to fare on, perhaps. Again the stranger interposed as if impatient of the landlord's blundering.

"Why not permit the citizeness the use of the room close at hand?" he inquired. Monsieur met the offer promptly.

"Certainly, the settle will hold me. I am used to campaigning. I'll be back in a moment to finish my supper. Come, lad," and half leading, half carrying mademoiselle, he followed the boy who held the lighted candle.

The room proved to be small to meagreness, but there was a bed and a toilet stand in the place, while above the latter hung a cracked and speckled mirror. At the door monsieur received the candle and thrust a coin in the lad's grimy paw. But as he did so, something in the boy's face caught his attention, tuned as it was to

read caution in every glance or word, and setting down the candle and tray with a brief word of advice to mademoiselle to eat something, he closed the door and stood in the dark passage, a grip on the lad's shoulder holding him fast.

"You wish to tell me something?"

The boy, evidently fearing for his own safety, shook his head.

Monsieur's grip tightened. "You know something that I should know?"

A nod this time, but no words.

Monsieur, impatient and anxious, shook his prisoner lightly. "Why are you afraid?" he said.

The lad cast a terrified glance down the corridor toward its lighted end. "Brouillon," but his lips formed the words noiselessly while he pointed toward the light in the ordinary.

"But why should I fear Brouillon?" returned monsieur, still in the same constrained tone.

The lad was now in a palsy of fear and strove to break away.

"I—oh, let me go! Name him not. He reads men's souls with a look, and—I saw his eye when your woman called him *canaille!*" With a wrench and a twist he was gone.

Monsieur, after a brief pause, followed on noiseless feet as far as the door of the lighted room, stopping at last in the shadow of the doorway, motionless in the dark.

From his place he could see the spread table, and the man who sat behind it, as also the host who faced him from the hearth, an anxious pucker drawing his brow.

The eyes of the innkeeper were fixed on his guest, as if he would anticipate every gesture with which the other was illustrating his discourse.

"That I cannot answer yet," the stranger was saying when monsieur came within hearing distance.

"Then what would you have me do?" inquired the landlord.

Both spoke in muffled tones, though the little black-clad notary made poor success for all his effort in trying to soften his shrill treble.

"I've seen too many of the tyrants to mistake the cut of the keel now," he went on, not heeding the other's interruption. "The woman I do not know, but the man"—he paused the barest fraction of time as if searching a tense memory, "but the man has something familiar that I cannot place. It may be the voice or the way he flings his head up and his shoulders back—no, it's something that I cannot catalogue, but it's there, and I cannot tell for my life where I've seen him. Mariot, you say, is the name he gave? It carries no meaning. I thought that once or twice he looked at me over-shrewdly."

"Ah, all the world knows Citizen Brouillon," came the fawning voice of the innkeeper.

The other smiled. "Well, well, perhaps you are right, for the great Robespierre himself has condescended to name me and compliment me occasionally. But not a lisp of my name to these or to any other of thy guests. I must come and go silently, to accomplish my work. I feared every moment thou wouldst let fall the name before I could warn thee."

The landlord deprecated so stupid a fault.

"Ah, mons—eh, that is, citizen, have I not seen too much to be accused of carelessness? Have I not served your noble self too often to need warning? What other hand than yours has struck down so many heads, and have you not always stopped on your way home from the north and confided to me something of your success? When the traitor Louis and his shameless Austrian were dragged back from Varenne did I not read your hand in the business? Yet did I ever so much as peep your name until it was all over and only the glory of your capture remained?"

"Yes, yes, Mari, thou hast ever been most true to the cause and to me, but to-night thou must be overzealous; yonder hen," with a jerk of his head in the direction of the passage, "is reckless and can be easily trapped, but the fellow is a fighting-cock and he will fight to the death. So truss him up somewhere until I can return with the papers. It was for this, to keep both under our eye, that I advised the lower room. Aristos both, I'll take my oath. Yet wait until the house is quiet, for the thing must be done quietly and secretly. The Austrian harlot has been dead scarce eighteen months and some live still who have forgotten her iniquities and who would help her sympathizers, if they dared. So do the trick neatly, adroitly, and I'll be back for them both as soon as I can cover the road. The Committee loves the citizen best who brings the most heads to the basket. Look you, Jules!" The wizened face was thrust close to the other's, showing line for line in the light of the two candles on the table, and one thin claw reached out to grasp the landlord's coat, as Brouillon's voice sank still lower. "There is more afloat than thou dost know. Gossips

whisper that Danton is beginning to hold back and Robespierre has ——" The rest of the sentence was lost in a whisper.

Monsieur drew noiselessly back and rapidly retraced his way in the dark passage to mademoiselle's door. Fearing to knock lest it reach the ears of the landlord and that other, he shook the handle of the door lightly.

"Let me in: it's Mariot," he whispered. After a moment he heard steps within and then the bolt slipped from its staple.

Mademoiselle, holding the candle, looked at him without a word. Her loosened hair fell about her shoulders, intensifying the whiteness of her face and neck.

For a single second monsieur hesitated, meeting her eyes fully, however, with that look of confidence that she had learned to expect there. But while he so hesitated a change came into his face, something that, recognizing, she could not name, an essence, a spirit, as vital as life itself, and quite as indescribable. She wondered if he knew that it was there.

But he showed no further hesitation after that moment, though when he spoke his voice held a certain awkward stiffness.

"I must come in," he explained. "I have something to tell you at once."

It was evident that he expected refusal, for though he spoke hastily and in a constrained voice, his air was masterful, rather than persuasive.

Mademoiselle's eyes grew big and dark as the candle in her hand flickered, but though the crimson surged into her face, she drew back at once without protest, and as he passed her and turned to make the door fast, he made a

discovery as she had done a moment before in him ; a break had come in her passionate defiance, and it seemed as if something of the exquisite gentleness, that must have been a part of her early girlhood, had returned to her.

CHAPTER IV

THE NET OF BROUILLON'S WEAVING

MONSIEUR made the door fast as noiselessly as possible.

"They are plotting mischief in the room yonder," he said, speaking rapidly but collectedly. "We must get away at once."

Mademoiselle set the candle down on the rude table and turned a steady face to his. "They suspect?"

He nodded. "We must find Louis and be off."

"But we cannot pass through the room where they are, and the door lies beyond."

He went to the window, and opening it, looked out. For some few seconds he stood there, but when he had drawn in his head again he seemed to have reached a decision. His directions fell fast but quietly.

"The stable is but a step from here and I can manage the fall—it is not far, though you will have to give me a hand back. Louis must have the horses ready—there can be no bungling at the last moment. Wait—let me think. I might take you out through this window now—no, they would suspect if we did not appear soon, and would be after us. I must go back to the ordinary and eat with the spy. But there'll be found some way to fool them. Meantime I must warn Louis. Be ready when I am under the window, for I cannot reach the sill from the ground."

"I will be ready," she promised.

For a moment more he looked at her with hesitating solicitude.

"It's cruel to urge you to new endeavors, but there seems no other way."

Mademoiselle's smile was like an open window through which one sees the everyday things of a home, a place of complete security, where fear of any kind is alien.

"You think this is our only chance: do you also think I am too tired to save my life and yours?"

She smiled faintly again, and, stooping, blew out the candle. The spirit of the thing was like wine to him.

"Bravo, mademoiselle. We'll win. We can't help it." He was astride the window sill now, looking back to whisper: "Do not let any one in, remember—no excuse."

She reassured him quietly and he swung himself over, hanging a moment by his hands before he dropped. A soft thud on the earth and then he passed so quietly and so close to the shadow of the house that she could distinguish neither footfall nor figure.

The moments lagged and lengthened while she waited in the darkness, and once she clasped her hands hard as a step sounded in the passage beyond her door. There was only a frail wooden bolt, she remembered, between her and the cruel eyes of the little man in black that were waiting to devour her again in their intensity. They reminded her of the eyes she had seen in the Place de la Concorde, eyes that glittered when they directed her own to where those two bars upright stood against the blue sky, summoning her to kneel at their feet. Two bars upright: the Baal that dear France was worshiping.

Suddenly, as she stood there, a realization came to her that was like a vision, so unmistakable was its prophecy.

Those bars against the sky would stand there for her always, a shadow across her whole life if she escaped them, a monster that might take that life at any moment, a heartless, cruel, horrible reality. And it was to this insensate thing that France had bowed her proud neck, calling it the symbol of Liberty! And in its shadow she, Celeste de Lavarolle, was a mere speck, a unit, inconsiderable in the long list of those great names that it had cut off in the height of their flower, names that for all time might have been a glory to France, if in her blind search for Equality she had not set those two bars against her civic sky, to decimate her sons.

Hark! A tap on the wall below? Instantly half her body was through the window, eager hands reaching down. The answering clasp of hands was firm and warm, and in another moment monsieur was in the room, breathing quickly. He continued to hold her hands while he whispered his instructions, and she submitted, seemingly as unaware as he of that clasp.

"Louis will be ready in a moment, for it is better that you go with him. We cannot take the carriage; its rattle would be instantly detected, and its flight is so slow compared to the saddle. Louis has wrapped the feet of the horses in straw, and he will stand below the window and catch you without fail. I will meet you as soon as possible at the crossroads."

But whatever unconsciousness had been his hitherto, he could no longer be unaware of the unseen hands that now closed on his with a frightened grip.

"No, no, I will not go without you," whispered mademoiselle disconnectedly. "How could I let you remain in my place?"

He felt her breath as she drew impulsively nearer, noticed the scent of her hair, and the tightening clasp of the hands that he held in his own. He could not pierce the darkness, and he had known this woman but a few hours, yet he knew just how her eyes looked, and that they were raised to his in a pleading that was no part of the pride they had held hitherto. He heard, with a quickening of the blood, the subtle change in the voice, as if the speaker had unconsciously dropped the recent fetters of suspicion. One by one they came to him through the darkness, these evidences of unconscious surrender, yet when he answered he betrayed nothing of his discovery.

"You must not hamper the plan now, it is too late. Louis will be caught if he waits below too long. It will be quite easy and simple for me to escape if they think that they have you here safe and fast; it would be hopeless to attempt to pass Brouillon if I were not alone. Louis will be guard for you until I come."

"But you will come? You will let nothing, Brouillon or any other, keep you?"

He laughed softly, reassuringly. "Brouillon, and mine host, and all Paris armed, cannot keep me," he whispered. He released her hands, and dragged the blanket from its place on the bed.

"Here, you must not shiver like that," he said, and wrapped her close in it, fastening it with a little blue heart that she gave him, the sole ornament she had been able to retain. The simple action of doing the homely, useful thing for her comfort gave a sudden realness to the situation, for in tragic times it is difficult to accept the changed and threatening conditions as realities.

The soul at such a time is keyed an octave higher, while the accompanying chords are all from the bass, all overdone, over clamorous, with no hint of the quiet middle register of everyday living. It is some commonplace, usual gesture or glance that brings the new environment home with a thrill, some unconscious response of tongue, or eyes, or hand to the need of the hour, that tightens the grip of terror on the heart.

Both man and woman felt this at that moment, but neither gave it utterance. Instead, monsieur made another hurried inspection from the window and came back to say, with the curious calmness of one who comprehends the enormity of the task before him, and its danger, and who braves both unabashed:

"Louis is below. Do not be afraid. Sit upon the sill and see that your dress does not catch. Are you quite ready?"

She looked back at him across her shoulder, and the outer darkness, less dense than that of the room, showed him those resolute eyes.

"If you have not come in one hour I shall return," she said decisively, and turning, caught the sill with both hands, and dropped.

He listened to the slight rustle of her skirts as she moved away and then, with tightened lips, he drew in his head. He straightened, too, in the dark, and listened a moment with lifted face, as a hound listens to the baying pack before he leaps to follow.

Then, passing along the corridor, he entered the lighted room beyond with his usual confident step. The fire had fallen somewhat but the little man in black still held his place beside it at the table, using a toothpick with a certain

feline air of expectation. His eyes narrowed definitely when his victim entered, but otherwise he showed no evidence of emotion.

Monsieur drew a chair to the littered table and began to ply knife and fork vigorously.

The other watched him for some moments, a smile slowly dawning in the crafty face.

"The *paté* is good for an empty stomach, eh, citizen-soldier? When one has traveled far and fast a *paté* makes a good comforter, and an agreeable companion, eh?"

Monsieur laughed. "Far and fast is a good guess, citizen, though how you struck the trail so adroitly passes my comprehension. We have made the distance from Breteuil since noon, and that's good time, you'll admit."

"Breteuil? So?" The notary sat a trifle straighter. "I understood you were come straight from Paris, in the very opposite direction, my good friend."

Monsieur broke a bit of bread with a knowing air.

"Certainly, I so gave it out, but bah! Who will believe such things save the stable lads who cannot reason? Such tales would be idle in ears such as thine, citizen. I should not presume to deceive, knowing the uselessness of the task. Eyes such as thine would detect the dried mud of the north on the coach wheels and would laugh at the lie, did I tell thee that we were from Paris."

The flattery was not without its immediate visible effect. Brouillon frowned, but there was the pleased smile behind the frown.

"Why credit my particular eyes and ears with so much cleverness, citizen-soldier?"

Monsieur laid knife and fork upon the table and

searched the corners with his eyes carefully before he answered.

"Have I permission to tell my reason? To speak aloud your name, citizen? I knew you within five minutes of our coming, but I dared not breathe a word while that officious pig of an innkeeper was at hand. It would be hair-brained to tell him what I know."

"And what do you know?" persisted the other, bending close to the table that he might peer across into monsieur's face, as if he could not wait for slow speech, but must drag the secret from the eyes themselves.

Monsieur was annoyingly deliberate. He ate several mouthfuls slowly and carefully while the other waited. Then, when the questioner had repeated his words, monsieur in turn leaned across the table to whisper:

"Those who are often on guard in the Place de la Concorde learn to know faces. I have been there too often to mistake the face of Jacques Brouillon—ah, you start? Or to forget it when I stumble upon it far from home. A man cannot be great and hope to remain inconspicuous. Who would not know the countenance of Robespierre on the other side of the world? Who, having seen his greatest disciple, could fail to know him even here?"

Brouillon drew slowly back, though his eyes continued their scrutiny of monsieur's face with a certain baffled persistency.

"So? Your wits tell you few lies, I perceive, friend. Your face, too, lives strangely in my memory. From the first sight of it I found it familiar, but I could not place it. I have the feeling that I have talked with you before somewhere: at the Guillotine, perhaps? Or have you

been connected with some case? I have handled so many that sometimes my memory plays me tricks, but not often, not often. Strange, how the thing baffles me to-night. What name do you carry?"

"Henri Mariot, of the Guard, citizen," and monsieur's hand went up instantly to the salute. Brouillon, evidently gathering confidence slowly, still was definitely suspicious.

"But why so far from Paris, Citizen Mariot? And why encumbered with that bit of rebellious baggage?"

Monsieur shoved his chair noisily as he looked at the other in surprise.

"Why, the great Brouillon surely knows my mission? I thought that my name would carry it straight to his memory. But perhaps Policon made a blunder! He told me that it was by your orders that—there's some mistake!"

"Policon?" Brouillon was at once all eagerness. Strangely enough, it is often the weakness of the wariest of men to fall before a familiar allusion, to be trapped by the use of a name supposedly known only to themselves. Policon, an obscure atom in the great seething mass of Paris anarchy, a man whose business and interest it was to hide himself and all his concerns from others, how should this traveling stranger know of the bond between Brouillon and Policon if it were not his right to know?

"What of Policon?" Brouillon repeated.

"Policon assured me that I was sent at the dictation of the great Brouillon—but if there is a mistake——?"

"The devil take thy stupid tongue and thy faltering wits," cried Brouillon, wrought to a frenzy by the delay and hesitation of his companion. "Get on, get on."

"But if there is a mistake I have no right to tell anything," parried monsieur.

"Policon's secrets are but a reflection of what I desire to tell him, and are wholly at my disposal," Brouillon explained in savage haste. "How shall I be able to know my own orders among the hundreds I issue every day, if you do not single them out for me?"

"Policon informed me that there was a plan on foot to exterminate a family root and branch."

"There are thousands such: which one?" Brouillon's hand on the table opened and closed spasmodically, as if the talons were impatient for the flesh of the victims. Very like a bird of prey he leaned, his thin, hooked nose beneath the little eyes, and his shoulders drawn high in his impatience.

But again his companion taxed his patience as he cautiously surveyed the room for a possible danger. Several of the late occupants had departed, but a group were gathered about the card table, watching the play, who could be seen from the table where both sat. No eavesdroppers near, and none who could approach without warning, yet the story-teller leaned elbow on the table and whispered the name.

"The family of Artois de Lavarolle, citizen."

The ferret eyes snapped, yet there was evidence of a disappointment in the face.

"Ah, now I remember, but it was rather a case of Policon's own. He carries some grudge against the head of that house, I believe, and prefers to satisfy it in his own way. I agreed to indulge him and lent him my name for use when he needed it in his search, and they were all trapped neatly through his efforts and my name, citizen."

He chuckled in reminiscent enjoyment, and then a change came in the cruel smile, and a feline alertness was visible in the figure.

"But I understood, on good authority, citizen brother, that the case in question was closed. The old sinner and his woman and his brat were to go this week, and the week is nearly spent. Surely the dear Lady Guillotine has not failed to claim her own?"

"They went with forty others yesterday, but Policon is not satisfied. There remain several servants who openly lament and weep, and Policon feels that a clear sweep will be a lesson to others. This girl that I have is one of these. She has been hands and feet for the daughter and Policon has decreed—always with your permission—that she shall have the pleasure of joining her mistress along the Red Way. He assured me that if he could have her at his disposal in Paris he would be able to obtain your consent. He knew that I could be trusted and he sent me down to Buteuil, where she had been hiding. But as he had no paper I was to decoy her, and it has been no easy business. For long she refused to stir, but was convinced at last that her mistress had sent for her, unaware that her mistress had gone forever. I persuaded her to a hurried marriage, and here we are. If the carriage had not come near upsetting we would be nearing Paris before dawn."

"But the marriage? She believes she is your wife?"

"Marriages are not heaven-made, nor priest-made, as doubtless the citizen is aware," laughed monsieur. "Why should she doubt? An old friend in a little village made an excellent notary with the help of a borrowed coat, and she thought a notary sufficient. As for persuasion, it

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was easy. Policon will tell you I'm a very devil with the women, and she felt safe under the ban, for a man could not offer his wife, even a new wife, to the embrace of La Guillotine."

"Yet she seemed not overfond, I fancied," Brouillon chuckled.

"A bit rebellious, but easily tamed, if Policon will give me time."

"Time? You are not thinking of stealing from France her enemies, citizen-soldier?" Brouillon was virtuously shocked. "Fie, man, there are many other girls, better ones, without that shrew's tongue of yonder parrot."

"But a bird in the hand," argued monsieur, "and I've grown to feel a bit of pride in making her cackle at my pleasure. I'll offer Policon two for her, any two he may name, for after all she has not sinned against the Republic."

"Two?" An inspiration flashed into Brouillon's eyes. Monsieur, watching it, saw it grow into giant size all in a moment after its birth. Brouillon spoke after a brief interval, and his smile was crafty.

"The plan smacks somewhat of the traitorous, citizen, but I have known myself the torment a pair of eyes may make, and I'll overlook the temporary weakness—what's more, I'll bargain. I'll pledge Policon's consent and you may keep the girl if you produce within the week one in her place, but it must be one whom I—I, Jacques Brouillon—name."

Monsieur smiled. "It sounds easy. Give me the details."

Again the talons on the table contracted and unloosed.

Brouillon spoke in a low, tense voice, the slow, red color growing in his face as he told his story, the purplish red of impotent, baffled revenge.

"I want the son of one who wronged me beyond repair. I want to look into his eyes and tell him what his father did to me. I want to tell him what his name means to Brouillon! I want to explain in detail—in detail!—the fate reserved for one who has injured Jacques Brouillon!"

Monsieur leaned back in his chair, one long arm hanging loosely over the back, his eyes steadied and alert, fixed on the face across the table.

"No doubt he will find it most entertaining when that hour comes," he agreed. "But why particularly the son?"

"The man himself is out of my reach, curse him a thousand times!"

"An *émigré*?"

"No, dead, dead, and not even the Guillotine to thank for it. He died quietly in his bed, like the aristo he was, his face calm and tranquil and his cursed dignity clinging to him to the very last. For long my time and energies were so taken by the Republic that I could not stop to right my private wrongs, and when I was at liberty at last to turn my attention to this enemy he had passed beyond my reach; but not the son, as I said. In him I can take full measure for what his father did. I went north, and for three weeks I sought for him fruitlessly. I thought I had him fast enough up there in his chateau, for my spies have been for long as thick as bees about him, waiting for the moment to strike, but he slipped through them all and no one has been able to reach him

yet. But it is a mere matter of time. The length and breadth of all France is mine for searching. He cannot escape Brouillon. Let him cry!"

"He has not attempted the channel, then?" monsieur inquired.

"He has not touched England, that I can swear, for my men are in every cove over there. He may be afloat, but—no, he is not the stuff to quit French soil while it holds a Frenchman. Too many times the chance has come to him and he would not. He is like his father, pig-headed past belief."

"You have not mentioned the name of this interesting person," monsieur reminded him, and his tone carried a trace of the hated languor of the old *régime*.

"Du Marsillac. His chateau lies beyond St. Omer, a step and a stride to Calais."

"Ah, the duke."

"The devil! No, there are no dukes in France."

"Pardon, citizen, my memory fails me often. When I went to school they spoke of dukes and kings. It is hard to correct the habit."

Brouillon passed his tongue over his lips.

"The son is the last of the family."

"And after him, the estates pass of course to the one most active in tearing him down?" inquired monsieur.

"Robespierre is most just, and—yes, it is to be assumed that they will pass to me if I can assure him that there are no heirs. Indeed, I may tell you that the Invulnerable has so promised, for my sufferings," and he touched his shortened leg.

The man who listened smiled again. "I can perceive your natural haste," he said. "But if I am to catch

this son I must know his face, his figure. What is he like?"

"That is the rub. I have not seen him since he went away to school, a stripling. We never had anything in common save the tutors and they gave lessons to each at different hours, for I was much older than he and my lessons were different. Before he was back from school I had been sent to other estates of the family and from there I came to Paris and the Convention. He has been in Paris often, they tell me, but I have never seen him. I would know him anywhere—I feel it! My heart would burst with its hatred at sight of him, I know it, I know it."

"Nevertheless, your bursting heart gives me small help, citizen, for my heart would not budge an inch to point him out," and he laughed.

"Go to St. Omer and make inquiries there. The people on his holdings profess to kiss the ground before him at his pleasure. The last of his line!—and they would lick the dust on his shoe buckles. Pretend that you bring good fortune and they will describe him for you down to the very pattern of his ruffles. Maybe, in their stupid fondness, they will lead you to his hiding-place. He has been able to stay in the country only because his place is so far from Paris and from any great centre. Use any means. I shall not haggle over a few francs afterward."

Monsieur arose. "You are generous, and it cannot hurt to try," he said, and put on his cap. "By morning madame will be rested, and we will set off at once."

"Not so fast, friend, not so fast. The girl stays with

me. What could you do with a woman tied to your heels? Moreover, I want her for hostage."

The soldier frowned. "What pledge have I in turn that I will find her here when I am back with your man? It is so beautifully simple to depart, all confiding, but not so simple to find one's belongings afterward."

"You fear to trust Brouillon?" and the bird of prey ruffled its plumage threateningly.

"The times are upset, Citizen Brouillon, and a man wants his own. Often you are called away on journeys, and much may happen while you are not here to see for yourself."

"You have my confidence; have I not placed in your hands my most intimate ambition?" argued Brouillon. "What more can I offer?"

"And if my wife is not safe I am at liberty to free the man I bring?"

"Surely, surely," promised Brouillon smoothly. "When you deliver Marsillac into my hands you shall have the girl. It is a fair exchange."

"Well, if I must," he said reluctantly. "I had better not disturb my wife; she would only seek to detain me. Will you, citizen, make such explanation as seems fit in the morning?" He moved to the door. "Here, boy! A fresh horse, and quickly."

He threw a leg across the saddle and tossed a coin to the hostler. Then, with a touch of the whip, he had passed the gate and was pounding the road to the north.

Brouillon listened until the hoof beats were no longer to be heard, and then he rose slowly, wetting his lips with anticipation.

"And now, the girl," he murmured, and limped across

the room to the dark passage. "In the husband's absence the bride must be comforted," and he chuckled softly.

But at the door he stumbled over a boy lying asleep beyond the threshold, and the clatter and noise brought the host and half a dozen scared faces. The boy was hustled and shaken out of sight, his master delivering in person a sounding box on the ear.

"Ah, so useless, so sleepy, always! That lad is ever under one's feet. So imbecile a fool I have never seen!" lamented the landlord. "The citizen desires his room? Here, Jean, a candle for the Citizen Br—— eh, I'll remember, never fear!—as I was saying, for the noble citizen. One flight up, yes, the same as always: the room above the main door, that your eyes may behold all who enter or leave. And now, here you are, citizen-notary, and good dreams."

Brouillon had followed the garrulous host and the bobbing candle with a frown. He had not cared to correct the landlord's error, or to admit that he had been in search of another door than his own. Such things as he had to say to Madame Soldieress did not require an audience.

Therefore, seated at last alone in his room, he found it expedient to wait some moments before making a second attempt toward sociability.

After a while, however, his impatience overcame his caution, and noiselessly he crept down-stairs and along the black hall to the door he knew well. Other suspects had slept in that chamber, and from there had found the road to Paris promptly. Like monsieur, he did not knock but turned the handle softly, testing it. To his surprise it gave at once to his hand.

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The room within was dark, and still moving cautiously he pushed the door open and entered, but in an instant the open window had drawn his glance. A patch of sky showed there where clouds drifted, and a gust of light air galvanized him to instant action. A single spring carried him to the bed. Empty!

He snapped an oath between tight teeth, and turned to find the innkeeper at his elbow.

"I—I found the door open," stuttered that worthy upon being detected, but one glance at the fury in Brouillon's face made him forget lesser things. "What is it?" he cried aloud.

"Trapped! Trapped!" hissed the spy, and his lips writhed over his teeth as if they were beyond his control. "Fooled by a sham soldier and an aristo! And he has my secret! And he will carry straight to Marsillac a warning—the foul fiend take him! But it is not too late! They're barely gone. Have out the horses and every soul in the house, instantly, do you hear? All the clods in the ordinary, every one, is pressed into the service of the Republic. He took the road to the north! A second's delay will cost the head of the man who makes it."

The confusion in the inn yard broke on the quiet night as if all the furies were suddenly unloosed. Everywhere tramped Brouillon, hurrying the laggards, lending a hand to a strap here, to a buckle there, cursing, denouncing, calling upon heaven and earth to stop time and speed his going.

In an incredibly short time he was in the saddle, summoning the hostlers and those in the ordinary. Outside the gate he reined up suddenly, to deploy his little company.

"Three east to Compiègne, three west to Beauvais. You, François and Edmund, straight for Paris and carry this letter to one Policon in the Rue Poulet, and see it falls into the hands of no other. The rest with me, north, for if he has not doubled on his tracks we'll have him before dawn. Brothers, he has played with France to deceive her. France claims him. Furthermore, France will know how to reward the one who brings back to her both the man and the woman. *En avant!*"

CHAPTER V

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR

BROUILLON had calculated correctly when he believed that monsieur would hold as long as possible to the route north, the straightest way to Calais. For some moments after leaving the inn he kept to the highroad which gave easiest going, stooping close to the neck of the horse as he rode, for the fields lay open on either hand and the wide sky made background too generous for one who rides to escape eyes. At the second side road monsieur turned to the right, making a *détour* across the fields that soon brought him back to the highway again, for minutes now might mean years by and by, and he dared not waste them in searching for unknown by-paths.

The cross-roads at last, just as Louis had described, and at the promised sign-post mademoiselle, still mounted, who moved forward quickly as he drew rein. The ground was wet, but the clouds had broken long ago, and were scudding fast now, out of sight. Louis, on foot, held the bridle of his horse over his arm.

"Ah, mademoiselle will be relieved," and his tone was distinctly one of relief that was very personal, as if he had experienced considerable difficulty in holding his charge in the designated place while they waited. "Mademoiselle was about to return for monsieur," he explained further.

Mademoiselle showed some slight annoyance. "I had

arranged with monsieur that I would return if an hour passed before his coming." She defended herself with a touch of hauteur.

"One sometimes finds it difficult to keep one's promises on the moment," monsieur smilingly assured her, excusing himself as if the affair had been the merest trifle. But perhaps the very contrast of his manner with the tenseness that both felt in their present plight brought to her the question that made her lean from the saddle toward him, as she said:

"They did not try to keep you back? They did not suspect?"

"No. But I had to make a delay there to give you time to get out of reach. One does not delay for preference always."

"And all the time you knew—you knew that I would return?"

The question held so much more than the words, and was so evident an effort to test his knowledge of her, both as to herself and her decision, that he turned at once, and spoke with an earnestness out of seeming proportion to the surface question itself.

"I knew so well that from the moment you left the window, I began to listen for your return. It was the fear of it, the sureness of it, that made it hard to fence with words while every faculty seemed focused into mere hearing. Every sound on the road outside was like a trumpet call. Twelve hours have taught me many things, mademoiselle. Most of all, perhaps, what fortitude means to a De Lavarolle."

A little hand flew out to him at that, and every trace of distrust, of the old hauteur, of possible dread or sus-

picion, dropped from her face as if a curtain had fallen. Instantly she was young again, with the impetuous blood of the De Lavarolles pounding in her cheeks, and flashing in the eyes that met his. His confidence in her fidelity had seemingly wrought in her a more complete confidence in him. Her words became at once personal and intimate.

"Was it just the hours that taught you to read hearts so well, monsieur?" she asked him.

Louis coughed uneasily and moved out into the road. The precious moments were flying, and while he felt it was not for him to mention this unpleasant fact to his superiors, yet the crude present was too full of possible disaster to be thrown away for the mere exchange of pretty speeches. His evident discomfort brought monsieur to his senses promptly.

"And meantime, in the inn, they may at any moment find us gone. Which way, Louis? Hark, what's that?"

Through the breathless silence the faint thud, thud of galloping feet coming nearer.

"Riders!" cried Louis and instantly was astride his horse. "This way," he called over his shoulder.

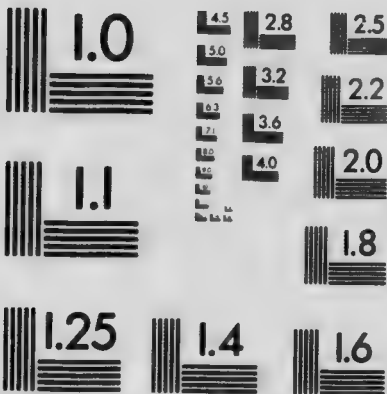
"Steady, mademoiselle, and hold fast. Keep a firm seat and do not look back," ordered monsieur, and they thundered after him.

Straight along the main road again they followed Louis, until, some half mile or more from the cross-roads, a broken fence showed a field beyond that led to other fields and a copse of trees that stood in their midst, an island of uncertain outline. Louis took the fence at a leap, and monsieur, with a murmured word of warning, slowed until he saw mademoiselle lift her horse and land



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safely on the other side. Then he was beside her, and across the stubble the dash was furious toward the protection of the trees. A few bare maples they proved to be, a thin handful, with a row of swamp willows that fringed a tiny watercourse behind them. Past the willows another field, and then the cross-road, at whose opening they had recently paused. Slower a trifle now, with the horses nevertheless held to the grass and ditches on the roadside, yet going at a round pace, while occasionally the noise of those other riders came through the darkness plainly above their own. For a brief pause they would be lost, and the fugitives would draw a breath of relief, only to have it torn away in the sound of that unmistakable thud, thud, on the hard road-bed. But at length the intervals became infrequent,—fainter,—and were gone altogether. Louis nodded in satisfied certainty.

"They believe that we held to the highroad, making north, and they will not miss the tracks in the dark for some time. We have no seconds to lose, even now, for it is all cross-country riding from here on, rough riding for mademoiselle. My aunt lives a little this side of Breteuil, and we must make her house before dawn."

But when the faint light in the east made the trees loom large and near, daubs of black against a gray sky, the three were still riding hard.

"Dawn," said Louis laconically, "and another three miles to go."

Monsieur glanced at mademoiselle. For some time he had been aware that she no longer held the same firm seat. She drooped perceptibly in the saddle now, and he drew his horse close to hers in sudden concern.

"Courage, for such a little way more," he said. She tried to straighten, and nodded resolutely, but it was a sorry little pretense.

"Ride on," monsieur ordered Louis, who still led the party. "Tell your good aunt of our coming and we will follow as fast as possible. Should you hear any noise, or should we fail to appear, return."

"It's almost a straight road now," Louis had time to call over his shoulder before he was off.

Dawn was coming fast, with a faint shell pink at the horizon's edge as if day were blushing in anticipation of her own loveliness, while still hidden behind those drenched fields. Monsieur's eyes, however, were blind to everything save the slender figure upon the horse beside his own. As the light in the east strengthened, he could see the faint blue penciling of the eyelids, pathetically heavy with fatigue, and the little hand that held the reins listlessly. Very fragile and helpless she seemed, this child of a class that was blind because for generations it had refused to see aught beyond its own confined horizon. Here and now, before his eyes, the result of that blindness was being visited upon one least able to endure or withstand it. Monsieur looked from her face down upon his uniform with a queer smile. How she hated it and what it stood for! How resolutely she had refused to accept its protection.

"Valiant little heart, valiant, helpless, ignorant, tired little heart," he thought, and then—suddenly, he frowned. Feeling his gaze, she had lifted her own, and meeting her look, there had come to monsieur a memory of the man who had told so exactly what this woman meant to one who loved her. It was for her that Franz had cast away

loyalty and honor—things for which at an earlier time he had sacrificed mademoiselle. But that had happened three years ago, when he had not quite comprehended all that having her might mean. Now that the realization had come fully, how Franz had valued the love that he had jeopardized, how he had sketched this woman's personality for the friend who had never seen her, and into whose keeping he was willing to consign her whom he loved beyond all price or comparison. And loving her, he had carried out his plan, and had trusted his friend, until such time as he could come and claim her for himself. At that moment, meeting those eyes, monsieur frowned rather savagely, feeling how incapable he would have been in Franz's place, had it come to him to entrust the woman he loved to the care of another man, even the nearest friend that he could imagine possible.

The world is made up, monsieur remembered, of people who do things and those who obliterate themselves for the sake of others. Of these latter, Franz had believed he could serve mademoiselle best by a species of noble suicide, with the horrible mob-violence as executioner. Very humbly, at that moment, monsieur felt how far he, personally, was removed from the possibility of such a view-point, how much he had still to learn of the sacrifice of self that love demanded. If it ever came to him to love a woman he would live for her every day, every hour, he told himself, and die for her if necessity demanded, but entrust her to another while he himself drew breath? No, no, a thousand times, impossible! So easy is it ever for us to persuade ourselves that what we want is best and right.

Yet, the thought of Franz's sacrifice brought with it a feeling that love was not love that did not demand the price of selflessness, a conviction that monsieur had heard but had never harbored until that moment. He had been for years used to meeting the demands of men with a man's weapons, each man for his own and for himself. Here was something that would insist upon a different attitude, something to be met with the deliberate extinction of self-interest. Again monsieur measured himself by the standard Franz had set, and again his spirit recoiled from the test. He had been all his life one who accomplished, rather than one who endured, and both instinct and habit were strong now.

But, having so sacrificed himself, what now was the result of the sacrifice, so far as Franz was concerned? Had he gone down past recall under the feet of the mob? Had he escaped to meet mademoiselle in England? If he had survived, there would be a time—was it near?—was it far away and shadowy?—when Franz, with duty done and free, would reach the haven, wherever that might be, that harbored mademoiselle. What would that coming mean to her? Would she understand what Franz had sacrificed for her? Would that understanding awake again the old love of her early girlhood? Why not? It would be such a natural thing, such a rightful thing, such a desirable—under the sudden twitch on the bit the poor horse beneath monsieur leaped.

A scant fifteen minutes brought them to where Louis's horse was tied to a tree set before a small house that stood somewhat back from the road. In the half-light it seemed rather better than its scattered neighbors. Louis himself was standing beside the low porch, in earnest

con rse with a head in a frilled nightcap that was thrust through a window, and after another moment of what seemed rapid fire altercation, the head was withdrawn and Louis ran down to the gate.

"It's all right," he cried, evidently much pleased and relieved. "The good aunt is eager to receive mademoiselle and monsieur, if they will accept of such poor accommodation. But—I have presumed to say 'friends,' not intimating title of any kind. If mademoiselle and monsieur will be indulgent: it seems best."

Monsieur murmured a word of commendation and dismounted, turning at once to lift down mademoiselle. She was stiff and lame, so hard had been those hours in the saddle, and she accepted monsieur's help with a little smile of childish weakness.

"Does this mean safety at last?" she said.

Squarely in the doorway stood the owner of the house, Citizeness Marci, a raw-boned woman-Samson, with whiskered lip and a voice that rumbled through the early morning as if the sunset gun had been forgotten overnight and was thundering now in advance of the sunrise. She drew back into the single room behind her to welcome them, but there was nothing obsequious in her attitude or speech.

"Eh, what have you done to the child, you two?" she demanded. "She is like to die of fatigue. You Louis, you were ever over stupid, but perhaps you can set the kettle on the fire. Come here and rest, my bird. Come, come."

Still talking, the citizeness seized a sack-bed that lay in a corner and shook it with appalling energy, before she flung it with violence into its place and attacked the

pillows in turn. It was immediately evident that this woman could do nothing by halves, and that the simplest tasks would have to be undertaken and completed with prodigious waste of force, wholly out of proportion to the service accomplished. While making the crude bed she continued to roar an invitation to mademoiselle to use it, an invitation that the countess gratefully accepted when it was ready, a performance that a week before would have been impossible.

And although the others talked and moved about, mademoiselle was too weary to follow their words, and indeed her head had barely fallen on the rough pillow before she was asleep.

Now Citizeness Marci became at once all gentleness. She covered the sleeper with a patchwork quilt, spotlessly clean, and the big hands completed their task with the utmost tenderness.

"Eh, the poor babe," she muttered, drawing away at last, and dabbing, with brutal disregard, at her own eyes with a corner of her apron. "Susanne will mother you, my pretty, my pretty. Heavens! To let such a child as that loose in the care of two harum-scarum men! Men know nothing—ever!"

The deep voice rumbled on and on, but the sleeper did not stir.

Yet, while preparing breakfast for her unexpected visitors, the frail house shook beneath her rapid and heavy step, and she found both time and thought, without pausing in her work, to direct Louis where best to hide the horses in the near woods, out of sight and sound of the highroad. For monsieur, she indicated a chair with a nod, and when, too preoccupied with his anxieties, he

failed to observe the indication, she touched him sharply on the arm with her elbow.

"Clumsy, sit," she commanded, with a glance at the sleeping girl in the corner, as if to curb with the sight her exasperated tongue. Following her eyes, and reading aright, monsieur, with a smile, obeyed.

But when, some time later, Louis returned, he found mademoiselle awake, seated in some alarm on the low bed, watching Susanne who, standing before monsieur, arms akimbo, shaggy brows drawn together, was shaking the rafters as she addressed him with scorn and defiance.

"And I tell thee again, citizen-soldier, not another step shalt she go. Who art thou to drag that babe about the country like a bag of beans, killing her with fatigue?" Her victim made an effort to interrupt the torrent, but Susanne stormed on. "Yes, yes; well I know she has served the accursed aristos, as you would say, but I tell you I do not care. She had no choice where she should be born, nor upon whom she should first open her eyes, poor infant! Suppose the accursed aristo woman did take her up and make much of her, as Louis has said, could the child help that? Susanne will keep her from now on, away from the whole pack of wolves, thou mayst rest content—and better a hundred times than thou could'st do with all thy brave finery of a uniform. As for thee, ruffling it here in the gay clothes the people give their soldiers, and speaking forever of haste and danger, and what thou wilt have the child do, and what thou thinkest best for her—faugh! Susanne Marci cares not a centime for thee and thy talk! Go where thou wilt and when: Louis and Susanne will hold her safe against a million, and with no help from thee!"

Again monsieur tried to explain.

"Indeed, thou art brave and strong, citizeness, and no one could tear mademoiselle from thy breast while thou hadst breath, I can see plainly; but a soldier has no right to question his orders, and I have been told to see her safe in England, and I have no right to delay. Every moment that we are here imperils thy safety as well as hers, and ——"

Susanne, who had started toward the fire as if she had conclusively settled the question, now turned upon him with a snort of defiance.

"Is not my skin my own? Can I not do with it as I like? And who would thrust out so much as a tongue at the widow of Charles Marci? Did he not die fighting for France and the Tricolor on that glorious fourteenth of July?"

Louis tried to interpose soothingly. "Fie, Susanne, what kind of hospitality is thine, to keep monsieur waiting for his breakfast to listen to thy boastings? He will ——"

"Monsieur?" Susanne turned upon her nephew violently. "Let me tell thee, Louis Ducrais, I'll have no monsieur-ing in my house. That word died with the aristos who made it. If citizen is not good enough for yon soldier, let him take himself off, and thee too for indulging his whims. Let me tell thee that whilst thou art under this roof thou shalt name no names but those of the Republic!"

The great voice shook the frail cottage again and again, as its owner continued to heap anathemas upon her nephew and his companion, volumes of sound that drove mademoiselle to rise in some haste.

"Oh, pray, madame-citizeness," she cried, "let us eat first and talk later. We had but a scant supper and have ridden all night."

At once, as by a miracle, the widow Marci was all softness. She turned, dropping her gesticulating hands.

"Eh, I have awakened thee, thou dear little one," she said in tones that were gentle in spite of their roughness. "Yes, yes, come, eat thy breakfast, like a good girl, and then thou shalt sleep again, for Susanne will take herself off, out of thy hearing. Come at once, little bird, and Susanne will give thee something warm," and, removing the hot porridge from the fire, she poured it into a big blue bowl, and set it, all steaming, on the table.

Louis, with the trained habit of former days, drew a stool forward and stood behind it, waiting obsequiously, and monsieur offered mademoiselle his hand. In that moment, the dingy little room was transformed to a stage whereon was played, without conscious intent of the actors, a bit of that artificial court life that was as daily bread to all three, and to suppress which a furious people had risen in revolt, and for which even now the old nobility were dying daily in expiation. Yet Susanne, alone of the four, saw aught in it of caste or social superiority. While mademoiselle seated herself Susanne cried to Louis in a rough aside, that was perceptibly meant to elude the ears of mademoiselle: "Thou canst never forget the teachings of thy impious training! The child might believe that she was one of the aristos herself, so humble thou art. Thou shalt not spoil her with thy crazy notions, even if thou dost love her, as a booby could see without so much as winking! Susanne will

train her for a good wife. But not if thou persist in thy imbecile practice of devouring with thine eyes ever morsel that goes down her throat before it reaches her lips. A good patriot might fancy that she did not know sufficient to choose for herself. Fie! 'Tis no way to get a wife!"

Louis, wholly at sea as to her meaning, looked at her for some solution of the mystery of her speech. That his aunt had mistaken his devotion for such as a lover would offer his beloved never crossed the mind of the honest fellow, so wholly beyond such heresy was mademoiselle placed in his mental picture gallery.

Mademoiselle herself was at the moment too much occupied with a new problem that had presented itself to heed what either Susanne or her nephew said or thought. Yet mademoiselle's hesitation in dealing with her own problem was measured but by a fleeting glance and the hesitation that lingered only as long as that glance rested on monsieur. Then, with a gesture of gracious invitation, she said: "Will monsieur favor me with his presence?"

The inborn hospitality of the old *régime* spoke in the formality of the few words, but the long inheritance of prejudice, only that instant overcome, dyed mademoiselle's cheeks a deeper color, as she offered thus to breakfast with one of the people, one of that monstrous fraternity that, to her limited vision, was engaged in stamping out all order, all loyalty and chivalry, all that made life worth living. Monsieur's smile was enigmatic, for he could not possibly mistake the subtle reminder of the inferiority of his position, that had been conveyed by neither look nor manner, yet that had been latent in both. He accepted,

however, quite as a matter of course, and seated himself on the further side of the deal table.

Both looked at the steaming porringer between them, and then at one another. Mademoiselle's cheeks softened again with that fluttering color, and she laughed for the first time in all the weary hours.

"Hands?" she inquired, and held up her own.

Monsieur's smile answered her, before he turned to demand of Louis a spoon, very much, mademoiselle noticed, as her father or one of his guests might have done, authoritatively, rather imperiously; and he a citizen-soldier. Did the profession of arms equip its private soldiers with this touch of established power? Or was this man, perhaps, another recreant noble, as Franz had been? Her face hardened.

Louis was too much engaged, however, to hear the request. His relative had found a new bone of contention.

"Who shall keep me from my own table?" Susanne was demanding shrilly. "Did not the good God make us both, that girl and I? Can we not eat equally well? Is the food made to grow different that goes into her mouth from the food that goes into mine? Is my hunger less than hers? What has she except youth that is denied me? Susanne Marci has still a crust of black bread to share with her friends: can yonder citizeness say as much?"

"Hush, oh, be silent, imbecile!" Louis's agitation was large, but mademoiselle rose with a little gesture of invitation.

"Madame rightly protests that this table is her own, Louis. Temporarily we are entirely dependent upon madame's generosity. Will madame join us?"

It was the second indication, and a stronger one, of the acceptance of a changed future; an effort to assimilate this strange, unwelcome present that was the outcome of the stormy past. Monsieur, watching the countess, saw that when she surrendered even a matter of custom it was royally done, with a forgetfulness of personal preference that was absolute.

Yet Susanne, recognizing half consciously the distinction that caste makes even in the voice, was at once appeased, and as emphatic in her refusal as she had been in her demand.

"Eh, child, eat, eat, and do not heed me," she protested gruffly. "Susanne's rheumatism will not let her sit to eat like a Christian," and omitting to mention the fact that two stools constituted the sole chair-furniture of the cottage, she heaped another bowl with the porridge and carried it outside to the door-step where she and Louis ate it together, and where her rheumatism did not forbid her seating herself.

On monsieur's second application the supply of spoons proved to be small in number. Louis found one for mademoiselle, but monsieur made his breakfast with a broken bit that had once served as a basting spoon, while Susanne and Louis lapped contentedly with knives.

For a while all ate in silence, until Louis, satisfied, went away to attend to the horses, and Susanne was left alone on the step, her empty bowl in her hand. After a brief time she, too, went away to stand with elbows on the uneven fence that hedged her house from the road and the ones left behind promptly forgot her.

In sharing the same bowl mademoiselle and monsieur had dipped into its contents quite as if this were the

usual breakfast service, but when Susanne had been gone several minutes the countess pushed the bowl toward her companion suddenly, and waited with suspended spoon.

"It is not fair," she reminded him a little petulantly. "There is plenty for us both. Why do you stop?"

Monsieur promptly returned to his share. "I was so far away at that moment I did not remember that it was time to finish," he explained with a laugh at his own absence.

A little silence. Then, without looking at him, mademoiselle inquired: "Monsieur was perhaps measuring the risk he is running?"

"Hardly," and he smiled as he looked at the slightly averted face, estimating the latent pride in her question.

"Then monsieur has friends who are waiting for him across the water?"

"No."

"Monsieur regrets the friends he is leaving here, perhaps?" a hint wistfully.

"Nor that either, since I may return when I have seen mademoiselle safe over there."

The straight brows drew into a little frown. "But it is the friends—here—whose temporary loss is troubling monsieur?"

Her persistency was remarkable and her companion studied her a moment inquiringly before he answered.

"Will it be of the smallest interest to mademoiselle to know that my friends, here or elsewhere, are quite as few as her own?" he asked.

"Few, but—different, perhaps?" She still held to her subject. "Monsieur has a family?"

"Neither father nor mother, mademoiselle," he said

quietly, understanding the quick rush of tears that stung her eyes at the allusion to her own recent loss. But after a moment she bit her lip, recovering herself quickly and gallantly.

"Ah, but monsieur has still some relative, near—not of blood?" A new and richer color flooded her face, and she turned away, as if to conceal her own surprise at her persistent curiosity.

There was no hint of his surprise in either his face or voice, as he answered at once, with a certain glad steadiness, as if he were eager to tell her the truth. "No, I am not married, mademoiselle. Thank God, no woman's heart is torn in these times in its anxiety for me. I may go even to the guillotine to-day—to-morrow—gaily, mademoiselle, gaily, for the worst part of death must be the grief and anguish bequeathed to those left behind. So mademoiselle may count upon my service for her to the utmost, and without any troublesome sympathy for another suffering woman's heart."

The countess rose quickly, and rested both small hands on the rough table as she leaned across to say softly: "I thank you a thousand times for your generous understanding. But may I tax your patience yet further? Until yesterday I had never seen monsieur, and to him I must have been equally unknown. What prompted him to abandon his comrades, his regiment, his future, to succor a stranger? Other women were dying in that dreadful place,"—a shudder shook her at the remembrance,—"*other* strangers were appealing to everything that was merciful in the heart of a soldier, yet monsieur risked all and saved me. Does monsieur wonder that I am curious, even when I am most thankful?"

He was on his feet now, as if some thought, half forgotten until that moment, had driven him to leave his seat. He cast a searching glance toward Susanne's broad back, to make quite sure she was beyond hearing, but his thoughts were not absorbed by the Citizeness Marci when he said: "I thought that I made it quite clear that I served for Franz de Beaurepeau?"

She drew back a step, as if she hardly were convinced. "The Count de Beaurepeau made friends everywhere, always, and I can understand that his soldier comrades might be devoted to him, but this rescue seems almost like treason to the Guard, and that corps has ever been as proud of its honor, they tell me, as have we of ours. How can monsieur satisfy himself that what he is doing is right?"

Again that enigmatic smile swept his face that she had seen once before. But it was gone in a flash, and he answered her gravely.

"I shall never return to the Guard," he said.

Her appreciation of his sacrifice was as instant as her refusal to permit its fulfilment.

"Ah, no, no. How could I accept such a thing as that? Dearly as I love life I could not buy it with monsieur's honor to his regiment, any more than I could match monsieur's obedience to the dictates of that insufferable Committee of Safety—no, you are right, I must not whisper even a word against the Committee or against any part of monsieur's party, since he has taught me to know that one pitiful, generous heart can beat even in those ranks. Monsieur, you have done more than enough to prove your friendship to Franz in coming thus far with me, and I thank you more than I can ever

say. Return and make your peace with your officers and Louis will take me to the frontier. We will reach it doubtless in all safety, and—and I shall never forget your kindness." She choked a little as she held out her hand. "There is nothing left me now to offer you but just the thanks of a woman to whom you have given not only life, but also the courage to live."

Monsieur passed quickly around the table, and took her hand with a quiet smile that drove back instantly the tears and replaced them by a color in her face that was like a sunrise among snow-topped hills. It was something quite outside his words that had brought that color, something that stirred the nobility in her nature by meeting it with something as noble as itself.

"Mademoiselle demands impossibilities," he said, with a look in his eyes as if he were surprised into telling her what he had hardly framed for himself. "Even if the Guard would accept me—which it would not—I could not go back now. A feeling, quite beyond my friendship for Franz, would forbid me to leave you. As you suggest, Louis might serve you with even greater success than I, but I am here, and I ——"

There was a sound of running steps outside, and Louis, stopping only for a hasty word with Susanne, sprang into the room, and pulling her after him, made fast the door.

"Some one is coming," he cried in a hushed voice. "Here, not a word for all our sakes, mademoiselle," and he half led, half pushed the countess into a huge press that stood in the corner. Monsieur, without comment, passed to a place just before it and closed the door that hid his charge. But when Louis advanced, pistol in

hand, to a place near the outer door, Susanne blocked his way.

"Well, what now?" she demanded loudly. "Must all the world go mad because a foot sounds on the path?"

"*Mon Dieu!*" Louis sought for words with panting breath. "Did I not explain when I came that we were mistaken for aristos in Paris and were threatened with death? You know the people there are mad and will listen to no excuse. They prefer to guillotine the innocent rather than to chance a mistake on the wrong side. This—this girl—is more—than—than you can understand. She—you see, she —"

He stopped, looking toward monsieur rather wildly for inspiration, but Susanne caught him up at once, as if Louis were assailing the bigness of her heart with an unworthy suspicion.

"You are trying to tell me that she is more to you than I can understand?" she demanded.

"Yes—yes, oh, may the saints forgive my presumption!—yes, just that. Oh, Susanne, save her!"

In a stride Susanne had reached the table and had caught up a knife.

"Let them come, whoever they are," she offered, immediately enrolled in the cause of the persecuted. "Let them attack Susanne Marci if they dare! Am I not a good patriot, and is not my house my own? Shall I not have here whatever friend I like? Let them come—if they desire to die!" and she rolled her sleeves above her elbow in a very grim preparation.

"You will hold to this, whatever they may say?" persisted Louis.

"How like a mouse thou art, with all thy fears," she cried, laughing loudly. "Should any come I have but to tell them my name and they will be content, the dear patriots, for well they know that neither Susanne nor her house could harbor an aristo. My poor, dead Charles would come back to upbraid me if I ever let one of the tyrants cross his door-step."

A feeble knock on the outer door interrupted her, and Susanne at once flung it open.

"Well, well, what now?" she roared. "Who comes at this hour to bother good patriots?"

"Oh, please," a small voice outside pleaded, "the baby is sick and mother wants to borrow some of thy milk, if thou wilt give it. The soldiers came at dawn this morning, and drained every drop that we had, leaving naught for the baby. She ——"

"What tale art thou bringing?" and Susanne's voice was rough and harsh. "Dost think to fool Susanne Marci with talk of soldiers? Are not all the soldiers that are worth anything either at Paris or in the Low Countries, fighting the enemies of the dear Republic? Here, give me thy pitcher, but take thy lies elsewhere."

"'Tis no lie, indeed, indeed," said the child again. "A whole lot of soldiers stopped at our house to get food and to rest the horses, and I myself heard them say that they were after a couple of aristos who would not save their country by dying as they should, plague take them! Like cowards that they are, they ran away; but they shall be torn apart when they are found, for the Paris women cannot be held back with wild horses when they lay eyes again on the aristo woman, so I heard the soldiers say. The man is a runaway soldier, drawn from

his duty by the fairness of the aristo witch. The soldiers will search every house from here to the coast till they find them, and then let the suspects look out."

Every word was audible in the room within, where Louis fumbled nervously with his pistol and where monsieur stood quietly before a door that had opened behind him to frame the figure of the countess, looking very young and girlish, had he turned to see it.

Susanne dismissed the young patriot with a small quantity of milk that she had snatched from a cupboard, explaining volubly, meantime, just what would accrue to any soldier who for any cause might attempt to search her premises. While she was so engaged mademoiselle leaned forward and laid a light hand on monsieur's arm.

"Go while there is time," she whispered. "Susanne will shield me but she cannot possibly save you, if the soldiers search the house. There is no spot big enough to hold you."

Monsieur shook his head but did not turn toward her.

"I explained that it was no longer possible to leave you," he reminded her.

"But—it seems such madness," she protested.

She heard him laugh softly, and the words that followed sounded very much as if he were thinking aloud.

"Madness, certainly," he said, "but not the madness you think."

Susanne came in, and fastened the door.

"So: we are to make ready for other company, it seems," she shouted, apparently regarding the impending search with keen relish. Then, seeing monsieur still in his place, she stopped before him, hands on hips, and

demanding: "Art thou a renegade soldier? Or art thou afraid to tell the truth?"

"No," said monsieur quietly, meeting her eyes, "I am no renegade."

Susanne looked him over sharply. "Then why art thou here running from Paris, instead of toward it, when thy place is there?"

"I will answer for him, Susanne," interposed Louis hastily. "He has been sent on private business for another—for the Count de Beaurepeau, if you must know. The count knows—this girl, and he ordered the citizen-soldier to take her safely and secretly to a place they both know, up in the north. What could he do save obey orders?"

"If the *ci-devant* count so ordered, the soldier must of course obey," conceded Susanne. "Ah, there is the fine man, that De Beaurepeau! He left his riches and his title behind him and came to the service of the people, and who of us would stop at anything to serve him? Here, soldier, we'll give thy brother soldiers a brave hunt for thee." She fell upon her knees before the fireplace, pulling at some boards of the floor. "Dow wit, you here, for my Charles made the place for the good old canary he saved when they sacked the chateau and burned it in '89. Ah, those were great days, when wine flowed for the taking. Here, now, down with you! It may be a tight fit, but it will be a softer bed than the one they have ready for you in the city yonder, if they take you back in place of the soldier they seek."

She laughed, jerking the boards at last from their place. Monsieur looked down into a black hole that smelled musty and damp, but at Susanne's further per-

suation, he let himself down into it, and his hostess dropped the boards above him, stamping upon them to make sure of their security.

"I'll stand here above thy head and watch them hunt for thee," she assured him, with anticipated relish. Then her voice, issuing orders to the others, almost drowned the trampling of her feet, though they were so heavy.

In his place every word, every sound, came down to monsieur, clearly distinct. He heard her say to Louis:

"Thou, Louis, strike for the woods to keep an eye on the horses, for thou and thy soldier friend may have need of them by and by. Here, girl, thy clothes not yet changed? See, the things in the chest that my little Marie once wore, oh, so long ago! She went to the angels, and took with her all her mother's heart—ah, hi, sounds outside there! Make haste with thy dressing and then give me thy clothes. How slow and clumsy thou art!"

Monsieur settled himself a trifle less uncomfortably in the musty straw that lined his narrow quarters and after some moments more he heard Susanne again heaping tender abuse upon mademoiselle for her slowness. Then Susanne's step approaching the fireplace.

"Such bravery! It seems a pity to burn such things. What broidery for a serving wench! Did ever any see the like? Gifts from the tyrants, doubtless, and—no, the child must never wear again the livery of the aristos! I'll wed her to Louis, come June, and safe enough she'll be when she's the wife of a working man. Louis is not so stupid, after all, that I will say, for he picked out as fine a bit of daintiness as ever I saw. There, burn, burn!"

A smell of burning clothing apprized monsieur that mademoiselle's wardrobe was turning rapidly to ashes. But, after all, it was necessary, and Susanne had shrewdly seen it so. He smiled a little, all alone in his narrow prison, contemplating the future Susanne had planned for her guest.

"Louis? Why, Louis would die of fright at the mention of such sacrilege, did he hear her," he considered. Then, whimsically, he turned his face up toward the boards above his head, and spoke softly in the blackness: "My dear Madame Marci, you are arranging all to please yourself, but without consulting mademoiselle and Louis, and almost, it might seem, without counting—me."

CHAPTER VI

A DAUGHTER OF THE PEOPLE

SCARCELY had the clothes been consumed, and indeed the smell of burned linen was still perceptible to the man who waited in the crude wine cellar, when the dreaded sound of approaching horses apprized him that the visitors were at hand. Monsieur's hand stole to the comforting companionship of his pistol, and he lay very still, trying to catch each sound, each move, above stairs.

Some trying moments of tense waiting, then, with a shouted order, the party outside drew rein. A call, twice repeated, then a rough hand on the latch, and a kick on the fastened door.

"Open in the name of the Republic," came the call again loudly. Susanne stamped across the floor and flung open the door with a shout that matched the intruder's own, and drove him back a step in surprise.

"Well, noisy one, what can Susanne Marci do for you, hey? A pretty set of knaves, as I live, thus to storm at the door of a good patriot. Well, art thou dumb, beast? *Parbleu*, must I find both words and wits for thee? Who are thy companions in mischief yonder? Stone images like thyself?"

The onslaught of words had been so unexpected and devastating, and the attitude of the hostess so defiant, that the visitor must have beat an ignominious retreat, for in a short time monsieur heard another footstep on the path and a voice of authority summoning the

soldiers. But even now Susanne interrupted with a storm of rapid syllables.

"Another popinjay, on my soul! Well, well, why don't you speak up? For you too want something that doesn't belong to you, I'll warrant. Have you, like your man, no tongue, but must stand gaping there while he bangs in a patriot's door, before she has time to ask his message? *Ma fois*, Paris shall hear——"

But even Susanne was but flesh and blood, and must pause some time for breath, and the newcomer was able to take instant advantage of the heel of Achilles.

"Hold thy peace, shrew! We come on the service of the Republic, and we are searching for a runaway aristocrat woman and her lover who masquerades as a soldier of the great Guard. They escaped from Paris yesterday. Have they passed this way, citizeness? No lies, now."

Susanne raged. Her voice thundered and rolled, a very tempest of wrath.

"*Gens d'armes* or no *gens d'armes*, who art thou to call Susanne Marci a liar? Liar thyself, thou empty, useless one! A pretty fellow, staying at home when all the good lads are fighting the enemies of the Republic beyond the border. My own man fell at the Bastille, a hero of the great Republic, before Dumouriez turned Austrian, curse him. And now thou darest come here and tell his widow that she would harbor an aristocrat! I have a mind to strangle thee!"

"Nay, nay, thou mistakest," the officer urged soothingly. "The cockade on thy breast proclaims thee a true friend to France, citizeness, and I but tried to warn thee that the pair passed somewhere near here last night, for they were last seen on the Clermont road, but escaped

about dawn, the landlord reports. I have no smallest suspicion of thy loyalty, citizeness, but I have orders to leave no house untried, and I must just make a quick search here—though indeed," with a faint chuckle, "I know well enough no one unaccustomed to thy ways could abide here long. Just a look, citizeness, and we'll be on our way."

Susanne pushed open the door till it groaned, and stepped aside.

"Welcome, all," she said. "And if you can find an aristo behind my walls, I'll help you drive him forth."

At once the floor above monsieur's head resounded with heavy boots and the noise of moving furniture, things shoved about, and of falling objects, tossed from chests and drawers. They were accompanied, however, by a running heavy-fire of protest from the owner, who evidently was not prepared for this wholesale rough handling of her possessions. From place to place she followed the searchers, protesting, obstructing, calling upon all the furies to punish the destroyers. Suddenly, however, her voice changed, and she halted in the middle of the floor.

"Well, well, my popinjay, what now?" she cried. "Cannot a poor girl wash her clothes at a tub without a man to stand by and make great eyes? Is it so wonderful to behold a maid, that the eyes of a man must pop from his head at the sight? I'll have no *ogglings* here, let me tell you."

"Ah, your daughter, citizeness? Her arms look overwhite for one who must work."

"No, she is none of mine, but a poor girl from the south who came with her brother when he marched with

the Marseilles regiment. He was killed in a tavern fight, and my nephew knew him well. She has no one now but me, and I have promised my nephew to train her well. She could never have been such good as a worker," with a disparaging accent, "for she served some *ci-devant* countess, they tell me, until all the family were proscribed, and then she ran away—for what honest girl would serve an aristo?"

The leader drew a step nearer, and must have laid a hand on the girl's shoulder, while he said in tones oily and unctuous:

"Turn thy face, little girl, and give me a kiss for the sake of the good Republic, the mother of us all—eh, *mon Dieu!* What a tiger! Does a man's hand on your shoulder —"

Susanne's interference was immediate and decisive, although she bellowed a mirthful roar, as she strode in between the two.

"Eh, a tiger indeed, and right named, citizen. Did you see her eyes, how they blazed? So afraid of one little kiss! A blow like that, and all for one wee kiss!"

"I'll take her where she will learn better," fumed the man, but Susanne's laughter was loud.

"Hoity toity, and on the charge of a kiss refused? Who would listen to thee, and not shake his sides at thy discomfiture? No, no, leave her to me, and I'll teach her manners, never fear. She is like my sister who had the temper of a devil, yes, no less than a devil, citizen, but she was younger than I, and before she was grown she would come like a lamb. I'll see that she gives thee the kiss now, if thou —"

"No, no, thanks, the taming might take a bit too long,

and laugh! Had I seen her face first I'd have waited a while before I made free with those lips. Wash thy face, wench, 'tis the color of the chimney lining! We of the *gens d'armes* are not always overnice, they say, but thy dirty face—bah!" He laughed loudly. "See, citizeness, canst thou clean thy canary? Pouf! She is all dirt and ashes."

Susanne echoed his sentiment promptly.

"Oh, Marie, for shame! See now, thou hast missed the kiss of the *gen d'arme*, and all for a dirty face. Any other girl would give the buckles on her holiday shoes for such attention and now thy chance has gone. Here, let me wash thy face."

The leader's laugh was louder than before.

"Oh, lord! It is worse than ever. I say, Simon, look here. The old woman has tried to wash the girl's face with her apron and—he, he, he! See the sight! Heavens! Does she call that a tempting morsel?"

But the men, collecting after their search, diverted his attention, and he gave the order to mount. He waited a moment for a last word ere he departed.

"Wash thy charge well, citizeness, for that kiss will keep. I'll stop in on my way home, for the lips of that young fury were scarlet and ripe under their black, and assure her I'll not forget to reward her blow with a kiss as loud, when she's ready," and his laugh was boisterous as he rode away.

Monsieur waited until he had made sure all had departed. Then, cautiously, he lifted a board. Near the window he saw Susanne doubled over in a very excess of mirth, her huge body rolling from side to side in her effort to imprison her laughter.

"It was fit for a play, for a feast," she bellowed at last, holding her sides. "And the look she gave him! I thought that I would have died when he refused to touch her dirty face! Eh, but I had smudged it well with the soot from the fire while his fool follower was hammering upon the door. Oh, the imbecile! The idiot detestable! And they think to outwit Susanne Marci!" and again she was convulsed with laughter.

Monsieur lifted the second board and was in the room. Beside the tub near the window he saw a peasant maid in clothes ill-fitting and much worn, with tumbled hair and a face disfigured and begrimed with black, a most unattractive woman. Hearing the sound of his coming she turned and met his eyes. The shock of the disfavor that she read in those eyes, prepared as he had nevertheless been, sent her around again to dash face and arms with the suds in the tub, and monsieur saw the crimson of wounded pride creep past the small ears to flood the nape of that slender neck. No, he reasoned confidently, her own mother would never have found her daughter in such a disguise as this one of untidy disarray.

But at her return to the washing, Susanne's laughter vanished and she sprang toward the countess with a shout.

"Oh, thou little brat! Now thy kerchief is wet and thou hast smudged thy gown! They may return at any minute, and what then? I could beat thee for thy vanity and carelessness."

Yet, in spite of the words, and the speaker's evident annoyance, they were gentle hands that wiped the dripping face on Susanne's own apron, and mademoiselle submitted with a surprising meekness.

Louis returned while they were so engaged, with faltering, anxious, questioning glances thrown forward in advance, a skirmishing party to test the strength and the location of the enemy. To him Susanne, with intense enjoyment, attempted to recount her prodigious cleverness in outwitting the searchers, a story that monsieur was obliged at last to shorten in order to hold council with Louis as to the next best move.

The discussion that followed was continually interrupted by the Citizeness Marci, who offered a perfect babble of advice and suggestion until, in desperation, the men went outside to settle the matter with some conference. It was finally thought best to delay further travel until nightfall, as the threatened return of the searching party was less to be dreaded than meeting new parties on the road. Mademoiselle was also too worn to be capable of covering any great distance, and a day's complete rest would do much to restore her.

Having reached this decision monsieur went indoors to report it, and Susanne was finally persuaded to leave mademoiselle alone to sleep, not before she had returned several times, however, to see that "the child was properly covered," so motherly had become her interest in the wanderer that her nephew had brought to her door.

But beyond the threshold no one could force her, although both Louis and monsieur exhausted every effort before they themselves departed. No one could reach "the child" while she remained at her post, she averred, and here she took an invulnerable position, a place she held almost without moving through the long hours while the sun crept to the zenith, and from the meridian close to the horizon again.

At dusk mademoiselle stirred, and, rising, came out to find Susanne in her place on the door-step. She smiled and rubbed her eyes as a child might upon waking, and Susanne's delight at once found its overflow in speech.

"Eh, my pretty! Now thou art beginning to look some. How Louis will rejoice when he returns. He worships thy very footprints, and Louis will make a fine man when the country is settled again."

Mademoiselle found nothing of interest in what she considered Louis's natural loyalty to the family he had served for years, and she considered furthermore that Susanne's continual reference to it was both tiresome and irksome. But she forebore to express this, regarding it as but another evidence of the reversed order of things, so inexplicable, so difficult to grasp. In other days she would have stopped such useless volubility with a look; now she sought for a change of subject.

"Where is monsieur?" she inquired. Susanne bounced in her place on the step.

"Here, now, none of that," she ordered. "All men are born equal, whatever they may say about it where you came from, and I'll have no monsieur-ing where Susanne Marci stands. That soldier is made of flesh, just like others, the same flesh as thine and mine, and if he cannot answer plainly to citizen when he's called, he may ——"

"Yes, yes, I know. I make so many slips, and you must have patience with me," interrupted mademoiselle wearily. "I was not taught to speak as you were taught, and everything is so—changed. I feel as if I had gone to sleep some happy night in my own home and had awakened in some strange country where only the fields

and the trees and the big sky are still the same. The people are all changed and foreign, with a language that I only half understand. Perhaps some time I shall master the new words and the new ways, but now they are very difficult and strange."

Susanne, with her usual fiery impulse, at once relented and took mademoiselle's hand in both her own, stroking it with her hard palm gently as she talked.

"Now, do not berate Susanne, honey bee, for though Susanne's tongue is like a hot coal it would sizzle harmlessly enough for thee if it knew how. But this soldier fellow now, that you asked for: what is his name?"

Mademoiselle's eyes awoke. The listlessness of her attitude vanished like a puff of smoke.

"That's just the queer part," she said. "I have never heard his name. I saw him first at—that is—he saved me from—from——" she hesitated, and Susanne patted her hand.

"Yes, Louis told me that the dear patriots did not understand; they are such heroes that they despise waiting for reasons. They mistook thee for thy mistress and would have served thee up there on the altar of Liberty without understanding. Eh, but they are as quick to feel the blood beat in their heads at sight of an aristo as is Susanne herself, the dear children. But Louis did well to take thee from them, since he had no time to explain, nor they patience to listen. And so yonder nameless soldier helped Louis, that was it?"

Mademoiselle frowned. She had never viewed the escape in just this way, and she found that, notwithstanding his faithfulness, she did not at all care to consider Louis as chief factor in that escape.

"Did Louis say that?" she inquired.

Susanne crossed her knees comfortably and settled herself for the joy of a long excursion into Louis's various virtues.

"In effect, yes, for he said the soldier was directed by the brave Citizen Beaurepeau—the good God reward him for leaving his hated aristo relatives to fight for France!—and Louis was ordered by the same one. Ah, that Citizen Beaurepeau has a great heart, little one, almost to compare with Louis's own."

"No one ever questioned his bravery," mademoiselle conceded and let her look wander into the approaching dusk almost as if she were searching for some one who tarried overlong.

"Louis seems to have much faith in the citizen-soldier the brave captain sent," went on Susanne discursively.

"He has even said ——"

"He did not chance, perhaps, to mention the soldier's name?" interrupted mademoiselle, so eagerly that Susanne was plainly ruffled.

"Where are thy wits? Did I not ask thee the same a moment since? But with him or without him, have no fear. Louis has a stout arm and a long head and he and I are sufficient to hold thee safe."

Mademoiselle withdrew her hand. "Where is Louis?" she asked indifferently.

"Off with this soldier fellow in the woods. They have not been back since morning. I'll get some supper ready, for let me tell you, it's no easy task to keep a man with an empty stomach waiting for his food."

Mademoiselle did not comment upon this piece of wisdom, neither did she follow her hostess indoors. The

red in the west had been gone some time and occasional stars, each a shining topaz, glittered overhead in a tender sky. Mademoiselle began to dream dreams. Life, she discovered, was like the sky, not always gray and stormy, but sometimes carrying hints of a to-morrow that might be wonderfully beautiful. The pink up there now was like a girl's cheek when a man said—well, various things. Mademoiselle put up a guilty hand to her own face to find it suddenly warm, and she smiled a little to herself hidden there so safely from other eyes, even red-brown eyes that often were so searching.

She was still sitting there some time later, her chin in her hand, when a man came around the corner of the house abruptly. She was on her feet instantly, with a sharp cry, but having hazarded a second look, she returned to her place with a faint laugh.

"Oh, monsieur, how you frightened me! I did not know you at first in those strange clothes. Where did you find them?" She drew aside her skirts as if to make room for him, though the step was wide enough for four or five.

He wore the black coat and stiff hat of an advocate, and, though he answered genially, she fancied he seemed more tired and worn than he had appeared hitherto. He dropped into the place beside her that she had indicated, and laid his hat, with amused ceremony, at his feet.

"One must respect the badge of office," he explained, "especially if one has had to turn highwayman to obtain it. How? Most simple. We lay in the woods all day, waiting for any generous stranger who might chance along, for it was very evident that a soldier's coat had become too warm for comfort. Not until near

nightfall did we see so much as a hare, however. Then along came Citizen—ah—let us see, what is his name?" He drew some papers from his pocket and turned them over. "I have his passport here safe enough. I made sure of that. Citizen Advocate Henri Ramouillez, and I discovered through him that I am bound for Doullen, there to make a will for—well, I'm not just sure, but I'll decide when the *gens d'armes* ask questions," and he laughed. "Do you know," he continued, as if she might be somewhat surprised to hear it, "do you know, it took some time to convince that fellow that fair exchange was no robbery and that my clothes and passport were more desirable for his use than his own? He made quite a protest, he did indeed."

Susanne appeared at the door, listening attentively.

"Bah! Advocates are pigs, who ever strive to cheat the patriots. It is a waste of time to argue with them. Did you tell Louis to put a knife in him?"

Monsieur shrugged. "Doubtless my heart was over-soft for these callous times," he defended himself. "I explained to him fully, however, my regret, in that I was obliged to deprive him of his liberty, and Louis trussed him up to a tree. When we reach Doullen there may arise complications, but meanwhile we have time to eat a bite and be off, since some enthusiast may mistake his officiousness for charity and untie my friend, seated now so comfortably beside that tree."

Mademoiselle arose at once.

"I understand," she said, "and I'll be ready as soon as you like."

"Thou, child?" Susanne's astonishment was as huge as herself. "Thou art to bide here with me until Louis

can make a home for himself. Louis must go now with yon soldier, I suppose, though I confess I can make little of it all, for I do not pretend to understand men's reasons; they are ever so foolish, and past probing. Let the men journey where they will and we will sit here, snug and warm, just thou and I, my bird, until Louis returns for thee."

She nodded with an emphasis that was meant to be reassuring, and scarcely heard mademoiselle's quick protest.

"But neither of these two would be here now if it were not for their—their care for me," she reasoned.

Monsieur's lips had met somewhat firmly, as one sets his mouth when he is about to propose a plan that he knows will be unpopular. His tone, however, was propitiatory, and he reasoned as he would with a child.

"My dear Citizeness Marci, you have been so good to us when we needed help most, that now we want you to add one kindness more. Some day, if I live, I will return to thank you in some better way than with just these poor words; but now they are all that we have to convince you that we need you—oh, more than I can say—to help Louis and me to get mademoiselle across the country and beyond the water."

"No, no, never," cried Susanne, "she stays with me," and her attitude was resolute.

"But listen," and monsieur's patience was as unshaken as her defiance. "You know that I promised the Count de—well, well, the Citizen de Beaurepeau, that if certain things befell that he feared, I would not rest until I had set mademoiselle safe on English soil, and I cannot pause or rest until that promise is fulfilled. Now, you, who are so loyal yourself, know what such a promise means.

It will be no excuse by and by to say that I thought she would be better off here with you. He said England, and I promised England, and England it must be."

He spoke throughout quietly, with an apparent ease of argument, yet even Susanne was impressed with the fixity of purpose against which it would evidently be useless to appeal. At times, beneath a perfectly courteous and serene manner, one felt as if this man held concealed a determination of steel, unchanging, passionless, indomitable. It was rarely aggressive, never loud nor obtrusive, but ready at the smallest provocation to show itself when opposed.

But Susanne was not used to submission, and, finding rebellion useless, she condescended now to argument.

"But the good Citizen Beaurepeau did not consider the trial of such a journey for the child. Because he could ride all day astride a horse, did he suppose that a slip of a maid could break her back for days together doing the same? What can a man know of a young girl? What right had he or you to dictate to a daughter of the people where she should go, or where she should stay? Across the length of France, with no woman by her side and only an unknown man who has offered his services—tut, it is not to be considered." And again Susanne nodded with force and firmness.

Monsieur smiled and stood up.

"The good citizeness jests," he said, "for when those two upright bars yonder in Paris hold a knife in their teeth, reasons that are good enough at another time seem poor, and we cannot consider any toil or pain. But surely, I smell something good cooking inside there?" and he stepped within the small room.

Susanne was not appeased. The maid who had come so unexpectedly to fill the place, long vacant, of her lost Marie, had grown too precious during the few short hours of her stay to be lost now without an effort. Had she not herself proved that the child was safe in her care? Yet that imbecile soldier was blind and deaf. Turning, she vented her irritation upon Louis, who appeared just then, searching with anxious eyes every shadow.

"So you think to defy your aunt with this stranger, eh? Who is the man? The girl tells me she knows him not at all and—what's that? No, I tell you she shall not go. I can hold her safe and she shall learn many things that she has missed. This man with no name may be a tyrant himself, how can you tell? How dare you plan to let her go with one who fears to so much as tell his honest name?"

But even the docile Louis rose to meet this new occasion.

"Know him? I know him for the best friend a man or a maid ever had. Further, if I had not seen him tested these two days, I know him for the friend of the Count de Beaurepeau, and that is sufficient for me. I heard him promise to take the count's place if he fell, and I helped the count hide the uniform for monsieur until he could take it to him the night before the day! The count told me that he was trusting monsieur with one who was dearer than his own soul, and that I could trust him also to the uttermost. He said distinctly that Monsieur Vic——"

"Hold thy tongue," cried monsieur sharply from the darkness within. "Did not the count especially caution thee to forget my name when others were present?"

A sudden silence. Louis's foot scraped the stone sill gratefully, and he looked appealingly, with the conscious guilt of a boy caught in mischief, at monsieur.

"I—I know, but my tongue runs away with me sometimes when I am set upon, and to see monsieur wrongfully accused!—I hope monsieur will pardon the slip. The count explained that he so ordered to save mademoiselle distress if she were questioned, but for me, now, to stand by and to hear monsieur touched with suspicion—monsieur upon whom all our lives depend! Oh, would the count have so ordered had he believed I should hear that?"

"This is not a question of pleasure or judgment, but of obedience," returned monsieur curtly.

Another waiting pause of awkward silence. Then Louis again spoke, still trying to defend his position.

"If the dear count had been here—God rest his soul!—I know ——"

Mademoiselle was quite close to him in a quick step, and she spoke in a little gasping cry:

"'If he ——'! Ah, Louis, the count did not die for me that dreadful day?"

Louis's panic was pitiful. He sought monsieur's face for courage, and Susanne, always emotionally sympathetic, wiped her eyes with her apron. Monsieur was the first of the three to find voice.

"Perhaps the truth is the greatest kindness, after all, mademoiselle, though I had hoped that you need not know this for some time," he said quietly. "I did not actually see the end, but whatever it was, you may be sure that he gave gladly in the defense of one whom he loved more even than his country, I sometimes think. I

believed that he had survived until Louis told me what he had seen."

"You—mean——?" Mademoiselle's voice broke. "You mean, he—he served on the scaffold in my place?"

"No, not that, though he would have done that too if that had seemed the only way. A man does not count it cost of any kind to save one who is dearer than life. He was on his feet and fighting when I saw him at the last, but Louis was watching from the carriage, you remember, and he saw him go down."

Mademoiselle's face was very white. She cast a brief, backward glance into the rough, bare room, faintly lighted by its single candle; a symbol, it seemed, of her changed condition, of her meagre present, with loss of every comfort, almost of the necessities of living. Then her gaze came back to the soft darkness of the night, now fully fallen, to the quiet group about her, to the stars that were as mysterious and as far away as the friendless future, that nevertheless must be met.

"And I continue to live, and I must live, uselessly, uselessly, while every friend, every one I have ever loved, goes down to save my useless life! What does it all mean? Why am I here when they are gone? What have I ever done to God that to live I must cost the price of every life that has ever touched mine? Oh, why did you save me? Why did I not go with them? Those whose lives were a thousand times better than mine? Can you guess—any of you—what it means to stand alone in the world? Franz was the last,—and now he too has gone."

Strained and tense was the face that she lifted to the

stars, standing rigid in the darkness, aware only, it seemed, of the other faces that had gone out of her sight forever.

Monsieur turned away. In all his philosophy there was nothing to meet the despair of this young girl, alone, as she had said, in a world of alien faces. Monsieur was dimly aware that Louis's hands were hanging helpless at his side, while his face was working with the pity that had answered that girl's cry. He was quite as helpless, despite all his brute strength, as was monsieur himself. But not so Susanne. Her big arms went around mademoiselle, and she drew her close to a bosom that was rocking with a very storm of tenderness.

"My poor little lamb, my poor little lamb," she repeated over and over. "Susanne was like that once, when she lost her man. Susanne knows," and in the motherhood that welled straight from the heart of a rough, ignorant, loud-voiced woman—a daughter of the people—mademoiselle found solace.

CHAPTER VII

TRAPPED

SUSANNE, with little pats and words of endearment, drew her charge into the room, and after a brief colloquy with one another, both men followed. The candle was burning steadily on the table and, while Susanne stirred the pot on the fire, mademoiselle found a seat on a chest, and leaned against the wall, white and silent. The curious exhaustion that follows upon an outbreak of intense emotion was upon her, and made even her hands, upturned upon the chest, look limp and lifeless.

A quarter of an hour passed, while Susanne busied herself with the supper and the others were each too completely in the grasp of his own thoughts to be conscious of the passing time. At length Louis looked up to offer hesitatingly :

"Suppose I get the horses and have them here ready? No one will see them in the dark."

"Very well," agreed monsieur, "for the saving of time will be worth the risk," and he arose, as if action of any kind were a reprieve from troublesome thoughts. "But be careful. Watch every sign, listen for every sound. I shall not draw a long breath until we have reached——"

He had opened the door as he spoke to look out into the night, and the words froze on his lips. On the threshold, bending to listen and peer at the door crack, a small man in black was huddled, who sprang back with

an oath at the unexpected light. At his back two *gens d'armes* stood, their eyes glistening in the dark.

In the passing of a breath the eavesdropper had recovered himself, with a smile, and, beckoning to his companions to follow, had entered the low-ceiled room quite as if he were at home there. Monsieur, however, first reached the table, whereon lay his sword. The *gens d'armes* fastened the door and stood with backs against it.

For a long moment not a sound was heard in the room. Then the visitor broke the silence with a cackling laugh.

"He, he! Well trapped, very well trapped, indeed. So easy! So wondrous easy! I did not dream that it would come so soon. Ah, it takes Jacques Brouillon to catch the flying birds, after all. Practice makes easy, they say. Well, my practice has not been small."

He rubbed his hands one over the other, and spoke unctuously, with a significance that was unnerving, even to those who, thus far, had looked with self-control upon death and had felt its close breath. Terror indescribable seemed embodied in this man.

Susanne, however, pushed past monsieur, and thundered at the intruder.

"*Ma fois*, what do you want here? Sneaking around a good patriot's home, and entering with all the boldness of the thief that thou art, I'll warrant. Can't you see, imbecile, that you have come where you are not wanted? This is the house of Susanne Marci, a good citizeness of the Republic. See!" She displayed the tricolor with much ostentation. "And see again," pointing to the red cap above the fireplace. "I live for the Republic, and it

will protect its own. Out with you and your dogs there, for I have no time to bother with you."

She strode a step nearer and Brouillon fell back promptly toward the door.

"Ha!" he snarled, "thou mayst talk boldly and swear roundly, citizeness, but a suspect thou art just the same. Harboring traitors and aristos is a business that brings much money, they tell me, if one can keep one's head on one's shoulders meantime."

"A suspect!" roared Susanne. "A suspect thyself! Harboring traitors? Not until my door opened for thee, thou venomous little snake. And aristos? Never an aristo has crossed my sill. I would like to see one try it."

Her conviction that she spoke the truth was unmistakable even to the man who was accustomed to read suspicion in a breath or a glance, and that truthfulness fell with sledge-hammer blows upon those who had found shelter beneath her republicanism and her ignorance. Furthermore, what might she not do when she discovered that she had been duped? Monsieur stirred in his place, but he did not speak and he did not so much as glance toward her. Brouillon cackled again disagreeably.

"And what are these, thy guests, citizeness? Good Republicans, like thyself, I doubt not, who are moving heaven and earth to reach Paris to show their devotion for the cause? Well, we will do our best to indulge them, and will speed them on their way. We will rejoice in their company, for we are bound that way ourselves," and he bowed with a smile to mademoiselle.

"These?" Susanne indicated her visitors with lifted

brows. "Why, this one is my own nephew, a cab driver of Paris, as good a Republican as any there. To be sure he served an aristo once, but that is past. Yonder man is his friend, a French soldier, the very bulwark of our liberty. And this child," Susanne's voice softened as she looked toward her; "it is true that she too served once in an aristo family, but she was too young to understand. She came with her brother who was one of the Marseilles regiment, and my Louis knew him well. She is a good girl. I will answer for her, citizen."

Brouillon's smile was diabolical.

"How kind thou art, citizeness, and so easily gulled. Truly, I would like to take thy word for them, for I see that thou lovest the Republic above all else. But alas, the Committee of Public Safety will not take even my say-so for another's honest intentions, and commands all suspects to journey to Paris, that they may test for themselves the loyalty of French citizens. 'Tis but a form, of course, so after a bite here (for we have come something of haste), we will all go together to the guillotine, where thou shalt receive thy full reward as a good citizeness, be assured."

Brouillon now drew a stool toward the table and seated himself deliberately, his small, deep-set eyes roving from face to face with a hideous mockery in their depths. As he approached, monsieur had quietly given place, and stood now on the farther side.

A pause, pregnant with emotion, in which each of the four prisoners seemed to hear the other's heart-beats, so still it was. The men at the door, stiff and straight, were motionless. Louis, with hands at his side, curled and uncurled his restless fingers, but kept his eyes fixed upon

monsieur, as if waiting for some sign. Apart, in the shadow, mademoiselle still sat, a wraith of herself, so still and ghostly she seemed; but she leaned forward, and her eyes burned among those shadows, searching the soul of the wizened autocrat whose relentless hands held her fate and that of her friends.

The candle flickered and sputtered, moved by some unseen draught, and threw into relief the faces near it: the feline expression of the newcomer, who leaned elbow on table, and smilingly peered into the shadows for other faces; the frowning brow of Susanne, who stood with folded arms, trying to meet a calamity that was stronger than she, and one whose breath had never reached her before. She, Susanne Marci, a suspect? Impossible beyond all thought. Between the two, his light touch resting upon the sword, monsieur looked down upon the visitor with steady eyes.

Brouillon, looking up unexpectedly and catching the steadiness of that prolonged gaze, lost his smile, and snarled an oath.

"Aye, look thy fill now, that thou mayest know a good citizen, for the time is not long before thou wilt look upon sights less beautiful perhaps. Dost need so long a glare to recall the traveler that yonder wench"—with a toss of the head toward mademoiselle—"despised and scorned in the inn on the Clermont road? '*Canialle*,' she said. Well, what about *canialle* now, eh?"

Monsieur's lips tightened, but he remained silent. His self-control perceptibly irritated Brouillon.

"So, thou hast naught to say, eh? Thou wert not so silent in the inn, nor a while ago when through yonder door I heard thee fear the return of the searchers. Ha!

There was one on thy heels even then, far more to be feared than any soldier, and thou wert weak indeed to let him hear thy yelp. Didst think that Jacques Brouillon could not read secrets that were not blazoned abroad? Thou thought'st to take thy pick of the prison beauties and, cheating our good guillotine, to rear thy brood from noble stock. But I—ah, thou wouldst?"

A pistol gleamed in Brouillon's hand, its barrel held straight toward monsieur's face, who, spurred to action in spite of his iron self-control, had seized and had half lifted the blade from the table. For a second the silence was intense. Then monsieur slowly relaxed his grip and the steel clanged on the wood. Brouillon at once lowered his weapon, and, with a derisive laugh, drew the sword across the table to himself.

"So brave, so valiant!" he sneered. "*Ma fois!* How thou wilt screech when thou seest the gleaming knife. It will be rare music. I would not miss it for much," and he continued to chuckle gleefully to himself, in the excess of his anticipated enjoyment.

Monsieur's voice, low-pitched and clear, came at last.

"I have denied myself the pleasure of running you through, monsieur,—a privilege for which I would gladly have paid instant forfeit!—and you see that I have rendered my sword without protest. I am at your disposal and I am your lawful prey. I have no fault to find. But, in return for my submission, be equally just. Let the women go. Why should the Republic wage war against helpless women and children? Exile them, if you must, but do not take their lives. They are innocent of any wrong, and I alone should in all justice pay the price for any wrong done the Republic. I enticed yonder cab

driver into my employ by spurious promises ; I dragged mademoiselle hither against her will—you saw in the inn that she resented my action ; and I deceived Susanne Marci into harboring us, though she would have died before she would have permitted one of the nobility to cross her threshold, had she guessed our identity. Who, then, is to blame ? Surely no one but me. You observe that I do not ask for mercy, but simple justice, the birth-right of every Frenchman, which surely the Republic has been established to maintain."

Louis shuffled his feet on the floor, as he listened, but Susanne tossed her head with a hard laugh.

"Hear him !" she cried. "His brain is turned ! As if Susanne Marci would not know an aristo wherever she saw one. Or as if an aristo could cross her door-step and live !"

But Brouillon seemed scarcely to have heard her interruption. His ferret eyes twinkled, and he spoke softly, as if enticing his victims to an unseen trap. He addressed monsieur alone, omitting the others as wholly as if they had not been present.

"You propose, then, to go with me quietly, unprotestingly, if I let the women free ? You offer me your life, let us say, in exchange for the girl yonder, for it is evident that the others are just trimmings for the real game. Do I understand rightly ?"

"You state the matter bluntly, but it gives my meaning," responded monsieur.

"And it is to be assumed that you have counted the cost carefully ? There will be no squalling at the last moment ?" Brouillon's voice lingered over the words as if by so doing he might enhance their flavor. Yet,

acutely open to a realization of this enjoyment of the spy, monsieur became aware that another and a changed policy might be influencing Brouillon, reason for which he held and which he alone at that moment might furnish. The light of a great hope, therefore, began to glow in monsieur's eyes and he said quietly, but with that characteristic forcefulness that his companions had felt before :

"The bargain carries no cost compared to its result, as you are probably fully aware, Monsieur Brouillon. What man would hesitate to serve in place of one who is innocent of any wrong save her helplessness?"

"Well, then ——" Brouillon's voice lingered invitingly, while he seemed benevolently engaged in tuning his mind to the other's altitude.

"But—but I refuse," cried mademoiselle, stepping forward quickly into the circle of light. "I did not interrupt sooner only because I did not dream that you could be influenced by the things of the heart that move other men. This man who offers to go in my place is nothing to me. I do not even know his name. He has served in place of his friend and for that friend only. I have no claim upon him in the smallest degree. I refuse, absolutely."

A stifled protest, a warning that fell too late, escaped monsieur; but the sound reached Brouillon, who found in it immediately new cause for shrill laughter.

"I was not mistaken in waiting for the bird to chirp! 'Tis ever the same old story: for thy plan is the one that is offered every day in the prisons, my soldier-notary, and every time the woman refuses. I have never known it to fail. Fools! These aristos would refuse a plank

when drowning, if it were not prepared to their exact liking, so short-sighted have they ever been. Well well, girl, thou hast had thy say, and, if it is any comfort to thee, let me tell thee that thy refusal meant naught, as empty as thy dead title. Didst dream that I should agree to take one head to Paris when I might have four? That would be the sort of bargain that would appeal to the tyrants, maybe, but the people want more for their money. No, such is not their way of dealing with traitors and suspects."

When he had quite exhausted the humor of the situation he turned to Susanne, who had folded her arms and was facing him, with puzzled brows drawn tight.

"Here, citizeness, we want food, as I said. How slow thou art in the service for the Republic! Whether or no thou art the dupe of these fleeing aristos, thou must show thy zeal for thy country and feed thy fellow patriots. Give us what thou hast, and quickly, for it is a long stretch to Paris, and we must be off before the others return to claim a share of the glory in netting these swallows." Then, turning toward the *gens d'armes*, he gave his orders with shrill eagerness. "Search the men—they may carry important papers. They ——" Something of warning in the eyes of one of the men sent him about in time to see Louis's hand fly to his belt, but before Brouillon could turn his pistol upon the rebel a word from monsieur had induced him to drop his hand, and both submitted quietly, each surrendering his weapons unprotestingly.

Mademoiselle watched the operation in silence, but her hands were doubled tightly at her sides, as if the silence were the utmost she could accomplish. Monsieur,

catching her glance once, felt that she was searching blindly for an excuse for such submission. Would not Louis and he make two against a mere trio, her eyes reminded him, one of the three but a fly to subdue? Monsieur's gaze met the challenge of hers without a quaver, yet when Susanne's sudden glance, fraught with inspiration, met his, both flashed in comprehension.

Moving from her place Susanne, apparently in obedience to the orders of Brouillon, crossed to the fire, which she stirred vigorously to a blaze with a crude bar of iron that served in place of poker. Her back, turned to the others, hid her operations, and monsieur alone could watch her hands.

When the search was at an end Brouillon suggested that he desired to know where the horses were hidden which had been stolen from the coach at the Inn Du Peuple. Louis appeared not to have heard the request. Brouillon's laugh thereupon tingled upon the stretched nerves of the listeners as a fiddler makes a string shriek.

"So? Obliging deaf, my driver friend? Alas, so short-sighted a policy. The horses are of little value and thou mayst keep them hid cunningly till others find them after thou art gone. I wanted them only to soften the way to the city for the women. It seems too bad to see the dears tramp all the way thither afoot."

Still Louis was obstinately dumb. Brouillon shrugged and dismissed the affair as of too small an importance to occupy the time of one in the discharge of a larger duty. To the surprise of every one present, Susanne's voice suddenly rumbled out from the chimney place.

"Thy men will find them tied within the woods at the end of the lane," she offered gruffly.

Louis shot toward her a glance of consternation, which fell upon her broad back harmlessly. Brouillon, however, had caught the look, and with a laugh of victory, ordered one of his men to go for the beasts, with an added suggestion for haste. The fellow mumbled a protest regarding an empty stomach.

"We'll fill that soon enough, when thou hast returned," Brouillon reassured him smilingly, apparently unaware that the first duty of respect toward a superior was not properly coincident with a statement of the objector's own opinion. The monarchical upheaval had brought about many changes that he did not personally approve, of which the present instance was one; but he regarded it as so small a difficulty compared to the monstrous gains the new system had inaugurated, that he brushed it aside, only half conscious that it had shown its head, and not at all aware of its true political meaning, this individualism that men counted so long a step toward equality.

When the fellow still hesitated in surly dissatisfaction, Brouillon was moved to persuasion and bribery. "Get on, now, for the time is growing short, and how will it seem when the others claim all the glory, if they return too soon? There'll be a five-franc piece waiting for thee if those horses are here and ready in a quarter of an hour."

The man went at last, still visibly reluctant, and Brouillon turned unconcernedly to his second man.

"We'll bind the men prisoners, but we must leave the women free to wait on us until supper is over. Hast thou a stout cord?"

The man produced a rope and approached monsieur in a businesslike way, Brouillon suggestively cocking his

pistol meanwhile and standing in a position that covered the prisoner should any rebellion manifest itself. Monsieur, however, seemed scarcely to have heard the proposition. Several times he had shot a glance, unseen by the others, at Susanne's broad back, and now, when the *gen d'arme* was almost within arms' length, monsieur leaped forward a step and shouted, in a voice that was nevertheless controlled and commanding: "Now!"

His grip on the throat of the *gen d'arme* was instant, and Susanne, as if but awaiting that signal, turned from her task with incredible agility, and Brouillon had only time to see that red bar of iron above his head before he went down.

Mademoiselle, gripping locked hands against her breast, moaned once, as if the sound had been forced from her against her will. After that she stood motionless in the shadowy corner, her eyes the only thing about her that moved as she watched monsieur struggle with his antagonist. Scarcely did she seem to breathe, intense was her waiting silence.

From side to side of the small room they swayed, those two, whose panting breath was growing louder each second, louder than the sound of the shuffling feet at last. Back and forth Louis followed them as they writhed and twisted, waiting for a chance to deal a silencing blow. Slowly the face of the *gen d'arme* grew from red to purple, his blows began to fall with less force, and waveringly. Short, horrible sounds he emitted, as monsieur's grip on his throat tightened, until, in a confusion of bodies, he was down and Louis in an instant had bound him with his own rope. They drew him to a corner, and left him there, Susanne's apron, placed grimly

by Susanne's own self in the prisoner's mouth, making speech as impossible as if the lips had forgotten how to frame words. Thereafter he lay quietly, offering neither opposition nor appeal by so much as a look. Monsieur, after a glance to make sure that he was safely tied, went over to where Brouillon lay, a huddled heap near the table. He knelt and examined the heart.

"Thy blow spared his life for a moment, but it cannot be for long," he told Susanne quietly, as if he spoke to hide from mademoiselle the gruesome particulars, that nevertheless Susanne must hear. But the result of his words was unexpected. Susanne again caught up the iron that she had flung into the fire when she went to aid the men in gagging their prisoner, and she approached Brouillon with it now, uplifted.

"Stand aside, then! The viper, the toad! Such a one to claim place in the service of the people! Let me teach him what the people can do for one who serves his own ends by spying upon honest patriots!"

Monsieur caught her arm. "Let him alone. Death will come soon enough. Thy blow was a brave one, delivered in the defense of us all, but it is far different to strike a helpless man when he is down."

"Wouldn't the dear France be better without such a toad? Then why hesitate?" demanded Susanne, whose philosophy was more convincing than ethical. Nevertheless, she turned away, and deposited her iron weapon in its corner on the hearth.

"Lend a hand here, Louis," ordered monsieur. "We must put this wide-awake prisoner into the closet yonder where he cannot warn his mate when he comes," and the transfer was made in a moment. Then monsieur re-

turned and disposed his little company for the best defense of their position. The women he sent up-stairs, to make preparations for an immediate journey, stationing Louis and himself inside, on either side of the outer door, to overpower, as he entered, the man who had been sent for the horses.

Up-stairs, apparently unmoved by what had occurred, Susanne clattered about, doing up bundles of clothing and rude necessities for the journey. They were completed in a brief time and then she came to where mademoiselle waited at the top of the ladder stairs. Neither spoke, and below all was quiet. Finally a step sounded outside, the feet of horses, and a man's voice anathematizing, as he evidently shoved and pushed them into some desired position. The listeners could hear monsieur speaking in a natural voice to Louis, and urging him to respond, evidently trying to delude the returning *gen d'arme* into believing that all was as he had left it. Now the door was thrown open and steps were heard, then the sounds of a struggle, brief and violent, then—that silence again. After a pause this was succeeded by the sound of something being dragged across the floor, the sharp closing of a door, and monsieur's voice at the foot of the stairs.

"Come down as quickly as you can, he called urgently.

The women descended, mademoiselle wrapped in a heavy cloak that Susanne's care had provided, and Susanne herself in a shawl and carrying two bundles. She went at once to the fire and poured some warmed-over porridge into bowls, beginning to take her own share with businesslike promptness. Louis took his from the

same bowl, as he had in the morning, but when monsieur, busy at his portion, looked at mademoiselle, she shook her head.

"I cannot," she protested; "it would choke me. Oh, why do we wait when every second is so precious?"

Monsieur pushed the half-empty bowl toward her.

"Mademoiselle, every morsel that you eat now will be so much gained. Heaven alone knows when or where we may find our next meal; it may be days hence. This is the way you can help us best."

Mademoiselle finished the bowl to the last bit. The others had finished before she set hers down, empty. The sacrifice of personal preference for the good of others was becoming a habit.

Monsieur took up one of the bundles.

"This is for mademoiselle?" he asked. Susanne nodded, and held out her hand.

"Give it here," she offered. "I will carry it for her."

Monsieur retained it, however, and with a glance toward the quiet figure of the *gen d'arme* in the corner, led the way outside. But as soon as all four were beyond ear-shot of the helpless soldier, he spoke with direct sincerity that carried conviction.

"Our only possible safety lies in separation. We have the horses of Brouillon and his men as well as our own, and we will choose the freshest. Susanne, I see, is minded to go with us. You and she, Louis, must travel by way of Crevecœur and Poix, keeping well to the west until you can reach St. Omer, where any one will direct you to the chateau of Du Marsillac, northwest of St. Omer. We two will ride through byways and by quiet roads, as far as possible each couple diverting suspicion

from the other—and pray God neither couple see Paris again for many months. Louis, you have your pistol? Mine is here and a sword, but we must hide the latter, for even the troublous times might not make the people forgive a sword on an advocate, and we cannot leave it here for those fellows in there to find when they are rescued. I have appropriated their pistols, however, for mademoiselle and Susanne," and he handed one to each.

"Now, Madame Marci," he continued, "your heart is as big as the ocean itself, and I know you will be glad to serve mademoiselle. I know you have forgiven me for deceiving you as to what we are, for your kindness has proven that. Will you let me take your hand and tell you that if the time ever comes when I can be of any service to you I shall count it a task before all others?"

Mademoiselle had accepted her pistol with a little inclination of the head, and, without a glance at it, had hidden it swiftly in her bosom: but Susanne was so busy now examining hers, and so fierce appeared her satisfaction in its possession, that she seemed scarcely to hear monsieur's promise of service.

A moment later, however, when he had returned from hiding the sword, and the four stood under the stars, all silent for a breath with the weight of the separation heavy on each heart, Susanne appeared to come tardily to a realization of what this parting meant. A common suffering had drawn together these four, so different individually each from the other in everything that constitutes daily life, with the close-knit bond that only a common danger or sorrow can furnish, and while monsieur and Louis spoke apart before they led the horses forward to where the women were, Susanne stood and

looked at mademoiselle as if her great heart were breaking. Seeing the look, mademoiselle turned and caught the rough, work-hardened hand in both her own.

"Oh, Susanne, what can I say? You have been to me a mother when they took my own away! I shall never forget your generous forgetfulness of self—when I was so helpless! You and our good Louis have taught me so much: that loyalty and self-sacrifice and—yes, and honor—can burn just as brightly beneath homespun as under satin. Dear Susanne, I thank God that He has let me know you! I have nothing to give you as a remembrance, yet—yes—this little blue heart that was left, for the jailers took everything else to buy us bread. Though it is so small, surely it is big enough to remind you sometimes of me and to tell you that I am thinking of you? It is a pledge that I will never be faithless to you or yours, my Susanne!"

Now Susanne was choking back big sobs that shook her great body. Monsieur lifted mademoiselle to the saddle, and she had gathered the reins when Susanne, with a cry, was at her side. She caught mademoiselle's hands and kissed them again and again, her sobs seeming to tear her breast.

"My little bird, my little bird! Who could believe that thou could'st grow so close to Susanne in such a little time? The nest in my heart will be warm for thee always—and I thought that when my Marie went it would be empty forever. Oh, what is it that thou wert born an aristo? How could'st thou help thy birth? Thy heart is as strong as those the poor carry in their breasts. Some day we will show the dear people that all the aristos are not tyrants, and I will show them thy

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little blue heart and they will believe that some love is yet left in those proud souls that—— Yes, yes, soldier, I'm going! But ah, my little bird! My life! Not even the dear Republic shall ever take from Susanne thy little blue heart. Good-bye,—good-bye,—my bird—my bird!"

CHAPTER VIII

CROSSING NEW WATERS

THE route chosen by monsieur now lay along smaller and less frequented roads, east of the main highway to Amiens, and it was close to midnight before he dared attempt a ferry. The sound of the river had been a faint accompaniment for above an hour, yet when they turned toward it at last and reached its banks, the song was less noticeable and in the dark monsieur nearly collided with the rude cabin that, hidden in a clump of bushes, served as home for the keeper of the ferry.

Descending, he rapped loudly on a door, that, loosely hung, rattled beneath his hand. After the second attack a head was thrust from a window and hastily withdrawn. Then a door slammed within and a woman's voice cried shrilly:

"Passengers, Clement! Two, and horses."

"Coming! Coming! What is the haste, pearl of my soul? Tell the passengers to wait until morning, while I ____"

"Passengers, I tell thee, Clement! Must I shake thy head from thy shoulders?"

A loud yawn, then the creak of a board beneath heavy feet, and a man soon emerged, carrying a lantern.

"Ferry?" he inquired laconically.

"As soon as you will, friend," returned monsieur, glad to find some promise of a crossing.

The man raised his lantern deliberately, the better to

see his visitors. "You ride late, citizen," he muttered. "The middle of the night is a poor time to cross the river."

"And we travel in haste, citizen-friend, for my client at Doullen is dying and he has sent for me to make his will. I've been hustled from my own bed and can understand how it rasps your nerves, this breaking of a good sleep."

Talking rather discursively, monsieur had led the horses toward the tiny pier that extended into the black water a few feet from the door of the cabin; but the ferryman stopped him with a few surly words.

"Thy client can wait, then," he said, turning without more excuse to go indoors. "He'll die not so soon as we if we catch cold to indulge his whims. Let him send for thee in honest daylight if he must get his will made. I'll cross only for business of the Republic after dark."

"But he is my wife's uncle, and he is close to death. If we are in time he may leave us some of his money. 'Tis said he has considerable. Friend, double thy charge and we'll call it a bargain."

The man shook his head.

"Why should I ferry others to get gold?" he demanded sourly. "Maybe thy client is an aristo. I'll do naught for such."

Monsieur chafed visibly, but after a brief time he spoke with more assured persuasion.

"Maybe, on the other hand, he is as good a patriot as thyself, and he dies. If thou wilt get us there in time I'll see he leaves something for the Republic, that thou shalt handle for her thyself."

The man turned slowly, and his eyes glittered as he lifted the lantern again.

"What is the amount, citizen-traveler?"

Monsieur's hesitation was but momentary. "Name it thyself," he offered.

"A louis each to go over, and the same to return," came the prompt reply.

"Well—what must be, must—so, friend, have thy way," and monsieur started again toward the wharf, followed by the surly Charon, who continued to mutter indistinctly something about too small a charge, as he stumbled down the incline.

Monsieur lifted mademoiselle from the saddle, and she stepped at once aboard the flat scow. The rough boards underfoot were worn and splintered and there was neither cabin nor shelter of any kind. Monsieur tied the horses to one of the posts of the rude rail, and the ferryman shoved off. A long oar, working in a socket aft, propelled the crude craft and guided it.

Mademoiselle found a seat on a log that was lying near the rail, and she drew her cloak close, for the night air was penetrating and chill. For a time she sat quietly, her eyes on the dark river gliding past her feet.

Monsieur made several attempts at conversation with the taciturn ferryman, who proved, however, to be deaf to all overtures, receiving each new observation with a grunt of disapproval, or a more disconcerting silence. As a one-sided conversation is rarely interesting save to the garrulous egotist, monsieur soon left him, and came across to where mademoiselle was seated. He leaned an elbow on the rail, one hand closing loosely about it, and in the hand, even in its partial relaxing, there were shown precision and flexibility.

Monsieur looked down at the countess inquiringly.

Dejection was evident in the small hands that lay, palm upward, in her lap, and in the pathetic, tired droop of her figure. He sought, with a man's desire for action, to offer some form of encouragement.

"Once across the river," he announced, "we can speed the horses, for the road has few turns for a considerable distance, Louis said."

Mademoiselle nodded comprehendingly, but did not otherwise answer.

Monsieur tried again. "How clear the night is, and how the stars shine down there where neither wind nor skiff troubles the water. It is just as if a patch of the sky had fallen to scatter its gold for you. It's a sort of good omen, don't you think so?"

"Monsieur is pleased to be ironical?" mademoiselle inquired, without lifting her eyes.

"Why ironical?" he returned, evidently somewhat surprised.

She straightened a little, and there was the faint breath of a sigh.

"To me the stars are a thousand lamps, each glittering its brightest to show our pursuers where we are. Wherever I look, in every shadow, in every tree trunk, I see only two straight lines that carry something that waits to flash."

"Yes, yes, I know," he interrupted hastily, "it's a gruesome business, but we are leaving it far behind every moment."

She leaned back, her hands lightly folded in her lap, and she followed his glance that warned her of the presence of the taciturn ferryman. She shook her head as if he had spoken.

"No, the creaking of the oar hides our words from him, and I am only speaking a woman's foolish fancies that a moment of real danger would banish, doubtless. Yet I cannot shake off a morbid feeling that the bars against the sky are shadowing your life as they have my own, and if it had not been for them and for me, you ——"

He leaned somewhat toward her as he interrupted again, and he spoke quickly, as if the words came without studied volition.

"If it had not been for those bars I might never have seen you, mademoiselle. I cannot count them a menace."

He could see that she colored in surprise, but she went back at once to her fears.

"Yet so morbid have I grown, so foolish, that even the stars burn me with their frenzy, hungry eyes that demand human blood, and I look among them everywhere for the kind eyes of Count de Beaurepeau."

Monsieur moved suddenly as the name fell from her lips. His glance wandered from her to the spangled water.

"I know," he repeated pityingly. "It is very hard for you."

"And not for you, monsieur?" Her voice betrayed her new surprise. "Yet you called him your friend."

The accusation of disloyalty was unmistakable and he was annoyed to find that it pricked him so sorely. He began at once to explain, almost with a touch of apology in his voice.

"Yes, we were boys together, but when he went away to Brienne school our playtime was over. I saw him frequently during holidays, for his father had an estate

near to—to where I lived, and his family spent some weeks each summer there, and until we were men the bond between us was like an elastic band that distance stretches but never breaks. Then came the Revolution and he wrote me that he had entered the National Guard ; but that made little difference to either of us. Why should it? A man has every right to believe what he likes, and friends should be all the more friends if there is one subject that they do not hold in common."

"But when did he win you over to the cause of the Republic?"

Monsieur discovered with a little start that mademoiselle was watching him very closely. He had been so absorbed in stating his case that he had wholly forgotten his rôle as guardsman, and he felt his lapse with something akin to the feeling of a child caught in a forbidden cupboard. Behind the reminder, he found a luminous quality in the girl's questioning eyes, lifted to his: a look that would have been still more upsetting, perhaps, had he known that it was the look that Susanne had surprised there when, in the early evening, on the door-step of the cottage, mademoiselle had talked of him. As he did not answer at once now, mademoiselle persisted.

"Oh, monsieur, I—I—my brain is in a whirl! Why do you hide from me everything? Why do you lie to me? Why do you act a part that must be a scourge to you every moment, if you were born as I was born, with love for country and king part of every breath you draw? Is it that you fear to trust me? And yet I have laid my life in your hands without questioning."

Yet even then he did not reply at once. He knew that he and Franz had agreed that it would not be wise

or fair to freight this girl with his fate, and that if they were overtaken she must be unable to name him, as the only possibility of his further service for her. Her tongue would be loyal, if it were torn out for the service, but her eyes were not so strictly in her keeping, and it would be both cruelty and madness to permit the test. Yet, so distinct a temptation was her question, so near and intimate her appeal, that while he argued against action, he gave ground.

"I became a member of the Guard only when Franz needed me," he said. "Surely, mademoiselle, you guessed as much before this?"

The darkness could not hide that leap in her eyes, though she dropped the lids in an instant, almost guiltily.

"I dared not believe—I dared not," she told him swiftly, softly, however, as if the glad words shaped themselves against her will. Then, with a hurried rush of questioning, she went on: "How could you keep it from me so long, knowing my hatred of the Guard? Why do you keep so much from me now?"

"What can I tell you—now?" he repeated, but he did not turn toward her.

He was suddenly engulfed in a riot of emotion, in a confusion of primal impulses. He understood in a flash that the sky was not more full of stars than was his heart of starry hopes that, bred of the night and the gurgling water, had leaped to life, to gleam all gold, with a glint that dazzled. What were they saying to him, the eyes and the voice of this woman who had been flung by Fate into his arms and his heart? And, swept into the whirlpool of his own emotions, he no more ques-

tioned at that moment his right to her than he questioned why the stars shone, or why the river ran to meet the sea. The divine right of royalty itself was ephemeral compared to this surging rush of passion that came from the time of the first man when he claimed his mate in the cave that meant home. From the hour of that first mating this something that held him now had been turning hearts into happiness with an alchemy that God alone could fashion. How could he fail to have his share in it—this call of the soul for its mate?

Flushed with his self-wrought blindness, he forgot time, and place, and boatman, understanding only, in a dim far-off way, that it was too early to tell her yet what he had found in his own heart, too early to test her heart with speech, too soon by weeks, perhaps, to so much as look toward her, until the farther side of the English channel held her safe and left him free, both hearts without bias from duty and protection. Only dimly he felt it all, a subconscious understanding that lay a rock-bed beneath his riotous, laughing, star-spangled river.

But now she was speaking, and he came back to the burden of her talk with a second shock, a stream of cold water that ran through his dancing river like ice.

"But how did you arrange with Franz about—well, me? There is so much that I cannot understand."

Franz! The man who had given this woman into his care, trusting him beyond all other men. If he had by some miracle escaped the mob at the guillotine, what would Franz rightfully demand of him in the days to come? What, in spirit certainly, did Franz demand of him now? His voice had a cold sound even to his own ears when he answered her simple question.

It seems so little to tell. I had stayed in the country doing what I could to keep law and order there, fighting myself, most foolishly, that I could still be an actor in the big struggle, though so far from the heart of it."

"But what could you do?"

"My task was colossal." He stood straighter now, and his attitude was of one who had handled resolutely the strongest things that underlie life. "I often wonder now if I could have undertaken it had I measured the task in the beginning. After all, I could only work around the edges, could only live what I believed, could only pass by without explaining even to myself sometimes, these things that for centuries had been lies and cheats, things that I knew to be injustice and oppression and yet that I could not read just to the ignorant hearts that, for all those centuries, had been waiting for the ripeness of time. Yet my task was less than that of many of my friends, for my father had been wise and foresighted above most men, and when Franz sent for me, saying that he had need of one whom he could trust, I came gladly, counting it the right of friendship, and its greatest privilege to serve. That night before—before the day—he told me that he was entrusting to me one who meant more——"

The boat grated jarringly at the landing-place, and mademoiselle was instantly on her feet. While the ferryman made fast, monsieur led out the horses and mademoiselle stepped ashore. But the ferryman, having been paid, followed her, lantern in hand, and when monsieur had lifted her to the saddle he turned toward his own horse with a glance of inquiry at the boatman.

The man approached mademoiselle deliberately and held up his lantern, looking into her face with a leer of appraisal.

"Well?" demanded monsieur, and, astride, he brought his horse close to her other side.

Unheeding the question, the man continued his scrutiny. Mademoiselle, after the first surprise, met his look firmly.

"What do you find, citizen-friend?" and monsieur came between them now, so that the man backed a step to escape the feet of the horse.

"Hah! Bullying words make small remedy when the fox is out of the trap, citizen-traveler," and the boatman's face wore a smile that was a menace. "Yonder woman," with a sidewise nod toward the countess, "is overfair and overyoung for a notary's mate in such times as these. She fits her new station little better than her clothes, that are so much too big. About how much now is she worth to you?"

For a brief interval no one spoke. Then monsieur drew out two louis and clinked them suggestively.

"Why do you ask?" he inquired.

"The soldiers that stopped at my ferry asked if I had seen a pair of runaways, aristos both."

Monsieur meditatively dropped the gold pieces into the man's outstretched hand. He threw the reins over his arm and held up a third louis, examining it ostentatiously in the light of the lantern.

"Yes? Well, what then, citizen?"

"Then I could tell them naught, for I had seen no one. Now, when they return, I will have good news and a fresh scent."

"What is your good news worth, should you say?" Monsieur was affable.

"Well, the Republic pays well for each head that falls in the basket, they say." A significant pause. "Perhaps thy head might be worth more to thee, citizen, than to the Republic?"

Mademoiselle turned in her saddle and spoke quickly, without troubling to lower her voice.

"Why waste the precious moments here? The man will not hold his tongue if you give him all the gold you have. He will but wait until our backs are turned to set the hounds on our track, and your last centime would not silence him. 'Tis not in such carrion as this that we can look for honor," and her contempt was biting.

Even the would-be bargainer felt its sting.

"Take heed to thyself," he threatened, turning toward her. "Hast thou no fear? Thou wilt sing another tune when I set the soldiers on thy track and they drag thee to the guillotine. 'Sdeath! But I will have thy heart out if thou wilt not pay! Nay, thou shalt come down now, out of thy high seat, for thy insolence!"

He laid a hand on the bridle, and jerked the horse backward. Instantly mademoiselle's whip fell across his head and shoulders in a shower of blows that sent him staggering back, half blind with pain and fury. A quick touch to her horse, a word of soothing whispered in its ear, and mademoiselle was flying along the road.

"That is the way we aristos serve the *canaille*," she called back, her voice ringing clear in the darkness.

Monsieur, with a leap, was after her, the ferryman springing for the bridle and missing as he passed.

"Let the soldiers make haste," cried mademoiselle again. "Our horses are fresh."

To monsieur's ears the voice rang a challenge that was almost gay, almost debonair. He wondered, as he clattered after her, what had wrought the change. Not danger, for she had been facing that for days together; not the recent, temporary rest, for that had been of moments only after a ride of hours; was it because she had come to know him for what he really was, and the sense of companionship had aroused the patrician in her to recklessness? He called himself a fool for finding such a reason possible, but he hugged it close as he galloped with bent head, the overhanging branches making necessary a continual caution.

He shouted a warning to her regarding them, and her voice came back indistinctly, but instantly. She was urging her horse to a furious speed that could not be long maintained, yet it was a considerable time before he had fully overtaken her and his first words were not at all the cry of pride and exultation that he had felt must out. Instead he said, with what must have sounded to her very like apostasy:

"That was recklessly done, mademoiselle. Money might have brought silence—I do not say that it would positively, but it might. The blows will be a stinging reminder to the fellow for days."

"I hope they will," she cried with a savage little laugh. "Who was he that he insolently dared to look into my face?" Then, after a moment, as if the thought spoke itself without volition: "My father would have killed him for less."

She meant no reflection upon her present companion

though she evidently attributed his failure to despatch the ferryman as part of the changed times that were so inexplicable.

Monsieur smiled grimly. How impossible to offer argument or caution to this woman, whom even the nearness of death itself had not been able to rob of her birthright of pride and fearlessness?

"Mademoiselle errs," he said quietly. "I did not question the righteousness of her anger, but the wisdom of it. The past few days have made a woman of me, and I fear every breath and every sound. When my mission is done and you are safe in England I shall breathe comfortably again. Perhaps I shall return to something of my old-time courage, who knows?"

He spoke lightly, and he laughed, but mademoiselle leaned toward him instantly with that dangerously happy look in her eyes. Even through the dark it leaped to him.

"Perhaps monsieur is the one who errs," she contradicted. "Or does he wilfully suppose that I would stay in England without him, knowing that he was in danger in France?"

The suggestion in face and voice was like the breath of a furnace, like the sudden red light that brings hidden things to instant view when that furnace door is opened unexpectedly. Monsieur, looking into her face, saw a flame there that had burned all smaller things to ashes by its absolute purity and devotion. For the drawing of a breath his face answered by a flame that leaped to meet the one he had seen. Then—the sound of the galloping hoofs was lost in the thumping of his own heart. Was this friendliness, thankfulness that he had seen? Did she measure in the smallest way what she was offer-

ing him? He felt choked, and the pounding in his ears grew louder.

Whatever she had meant, it was impossible to build the castle of his life on words spoken thoughtlessly perhaps; spoken certainly while she was under his care. But by and by, in England—— Would he not be free then to tell her what any word of hers meant to him? Would not even the dead Franz absolve him then, if he knew in that far-away place where human hearts are no longer flushed with this surge of red blood? But, even in Paradise itself, could a man forget such eyes as these that looked now into his own? Forget lips, curving into a smile such as this that was meant for him alone? And the man who was here now? Why should he not hold her forever and forever in arms that did not know how to unlock? Would she resist, now that she knew he was no longer one of the hated Guard? Would she submit, with that bewildering happiness in her eyes that she was offering him? He shut his teeth hard, fighting for sanity and self-control. When he looked toward her again, her face was turned away.

After a time that, measured by that unruly heart, seemed years and yet was only the passing of a thought, he felt that he had himself sufficiently well in hand to answer lightly.

"Ah, mademoiselle," he began, and added in a rush of words: "Ah, be merciful! A man is not a stone that he can lie in the very bed of a torrent when its waters are whirling about him. Until you are in England I must remember that I am only an automaton—a machine that is set to do another's will—to serve in another's place. Help me! Help me to remember only that!"

CHAPTER IX

THE INVALID AT THE RED CAP

DAWN found them still flying northward, though now both riders and horses were showing signs of great fatigue. They were nearing Amiens, and monsieur felt that prudence demanded, even at the expense of a shorter road, a *détour* that would circle Amiens and bring them out on the highway again north of the city. Consequently, a little south of the town, he discovered a road leading west and he took advantage of it until daylight and Faree Village were both come.

In the woods that lay a trifle west of the village they drew rein, and it required no argument to persuade mademoiselle to dismount and remain hidden in the woods while her protector went into the village to forage. He spread her cloak for her, and tucked her comfortably within it, in a place protected from the wind by the trees and a slight rise of ground, explaining the necessity for going, and his plans for the immediate future.

"If I cannot get food for you in the inn I will surely find some in one of the houses scattered along the road, and forage for the horses. I'll return at the earliest possible moment. You will not be afraid here alone?"

She laughed, with a touch of amusement in her weariness.

"What good would fear do?" she inquired, settling herself under the warm cloak, her cheek in her hand.

"Fear and I have been friends for so long I should be lonely without it," and she laughed again, to reassure him.

He looked about him vaguely, as if in the trees themselves might lie some escape from the necessity of leaving her thus alone. He straightened then, with a smile at his own folly, that nearly matched her own.

"We can rest here only a few hours, for we must pass through Doullen in the dark. Yet I have little fear once past Doullen, for the country to Agincourt and beyond is an open book, and I know every turn and twist. Have you strength to try saddle again this afternoon?"

"I am ready whenever you like," said mademoiselle, and she closed her eyes sleepily.

"Then about four we will be off, and meantime you get all the rest you can. I'll stop at the inn and see if any searchers are ahead of us, and I'll find some supplies and get them to you somehow."

She watched him go, too tired to be very much afraid even of the loneliness that his going left. She stretched herself luxuriously on the hard ground. A faint green howed overhead, promise of the nearness of spring. The sun was climbing fast now, and sending long shafts of light through the branches, searching out her hiding-place with certainty. By and by people passing through the woods would see her. She closed her eyes. Let them come. She was far too tired to care who came or who found her. Monsieur would hold her safe against them all. Smiling, she entered a bright road that led into the land of dreams.

Monsieur, tramping through the woods, came out upon the highroad, and, turning to the right, followed it until the gable of an inn, half hidden behind the branches of a

great tree, displayed a swinging sign-board that informed travelers that bed and board were to be found at the Red Cap.

Monsieur's step on the path that led to its main door was confident, and once within the ordinary he moved to a table and called for food.

It was a corner table he chose, somewhat in the shadow but whence his glance could sweep the room and command those who entered by either door. He noticed that the place was clean to a pleasant freshness and a plump girl stood behind the bar, exchanging banter with a couple of men who lounged against it.

"But who shall forbid me to make eyes at both travelers, if I like?" she demanded gaily. She wore a tricolor cockade in her dark hair and she turned, as she spoke, to arrange it satisfactorily before the mirror behind her. So doing she caught the eye of monsieur, seated at his table, and tossed her head as if challenging his attention and admiration.

"If you look at either I'll report you to madame," laughed one of her companions, who seemed rather more loquacious than his friend. "Madame will see fair play and will protect her guests from the arrows of bright eyes. The one who is ill is too sick to suffer much from thy glances, but the strong one makes too good a target. He was not so absorbed in the care of his friend, I noticed, that he forgot to follow thee with his eyes."

She laughed, evidently much flattered.

"Ah, the poor man! How ill he looked," and she affected a sprightly sympathy. Then, leaning across the counter, she addressed monsieur. "Did the citizen-traveler desire breakfast?"

"If mademoiselle will be so kind," monsieur smilingly assented. But at the word both men turned at once and looked at him shrewdly. The girl came immediately from behind the bar and swept him a curtsey.

"Pardon, the citizen-traveler is most kind, but he must have come from far indeed, if he does not know that there are no longer any in France who may answer to mademoiselle or madame, save only madame herself who keeps the Red Cap, and who is so great a patriot that the people can trust her to hold her title."

"Yes, I knew, but a pair of black eyes robbed me of all such knowledge," protested monsieur. "Will the Citizeness of the Black Eyes kindly give me something to eat?"

With a delighted laugh she was gone and the men at the bar turned to their wine. One tossed his off at a single gulp, but the other sipped his portion gravely, as if weighing the fate of the nation between the sips.

"What about these new travelers?" asked the impetuous one, with lowered voice, as if he did not care to include the third party in his conversation. "One is suffering from a fever, you say? I wonder madame permitted him a bed. It may be infectious."

The second man set down his glass softly. Monsieur, watching covertly, perceived that everything about him was gentle and deliberate, but it was the inflexible gentleness of a leathern gauntlet drawn over a mailed hand. This man answered now with his eyes on his glass.

"All is wheat that comes to madame's mill," and he managed to convey a whole brood of suspicions in the few words.

"How? Explain. Madame is a true patriot."

The second man shrugged slightly. "Madame controls her own affairs. She would not knowingly harbor an aristo—far from me is it to suggest an act so diabolical, but she understands that the Invulnerable is like the gods in that his mill grinds slowly but exceeding small, and madame is wise therefore. However, one may do much in ignorance and escape—especially when one remembers that the Invulnerable is in far-away Paris."

The second man glanced once at the silent figure of monsieur in the corner, but as that gentleman seemed drowsy with his recent journey, he returned to his questions.

"You accuse madame and you suspect the travelers; but do you know anything of these last?"

The other twirled his glass slowly and then raised it for another sip. "I have known illness to be a very simple and effective ruse at times," he announced quietly.

"Bah!" The impatience of the first speaker conquered his caution and he turned vexedly in his place. "All men are suspects to you, Josef, until proved otherwise, and all travelers are devil-aristos until La Guillotine has cut them in half for inspection. Rosalie makes eyes at chance comers, and at once you are in arms. What else can be said against them? Surely I, who so love the Republic, will believe anything reasonable against any possible aristo, but there must be at least more ground than a couple of glances from a pair of silly eyes. These men show passports and are orderly and quiet, and though they have arrived thus early in the morning, others have ridden all night without becoming food for the prisons. Madame is as careful in sifting her guests as any patriot among us, and you invite a whole

village to her defense when you accuse her who has held herself so absolutely at the service of the Republic."

The plump maid, returning at that moment, stopped their speech. She set monsieur's breakfast before him very deftly and prettily; head, hands, and body all openly deployed for admiration. Yet, after a brief time, monsieur fancied that while she served him and dimpled at each jest, she yet watched the others occasionally from the corners of those laughing eyes, and that no smallest look of those two at the bar escaped her. He felt the tenseness of caution in the very atmosphere.

"Mademoiselle-citizenship is as quick as she is capable," monsieur told her gaily. "The cream? And the sugar? Ah, the coffee of the Red Cap is justly famed for its excellence. Mademoiselle of the Black Eyes made it with her own hands perhaps?"

"The citizen-traveler compliments and flatters," she retorted with delight. "Yet the coffee was made not for him, but for the Citizen Martignon above stairs who arrived this morning with his sick brother. Ah, the poor sick one! So gentle and so ill! My heart bleeds for him," and she dropped her head a little on one side that she might flash another glance under her lashes at the two near the bar, who made no effort to disguise their interest in her remarks.

"Then the citizenship has attended the strangers?" inquired monsieur casually, as he buttered a biscuit. "It seems as if I used to know a man named Martignon. Martignon? What is he like?"

"The one who is well is big and stout, and as tall as the citizen himself, but not like in other way," with a flattering smile at her questioner. "And his face is big,

not at all like your own, citizen, and he has eyes that look tired. What wonder? For he has brought his brother a long way, he tells me, and they are going to Doullen to their home. His poor brother was wounded in a due' and is white and worn with the fever, not red as others seem when sick. He is sometimes half beside himself with the pain and moans for a sister who died long ago. I was in the room so short a minute yet he whispered the name a hundred times: 'Celeste, Celeste,' over and over again. And the brother ever trying to hush him with: 'Yes, Franz, you will find her soon.' The big one can have little hope when he speaks thus of the other side the grave."

Monsieur's knife clattered to the floor and he bent quickly to regain it. As he lifted his head the man who had twirled his glass was looking at him directly for the first time. Leaning elbow on the bar and sending his low voice across the room, freighted with hidden but perceptible meaning of some kind, he offered slowly:

"There is still living the *ci-devant* Count de Martignon whose brother Honoré was in the Assembly. But I never heard of another brother, or one who was named Franz. Perhaps you can help me, citizen-traveler?"

Monsieur met his eyes squarely. "The name still seems familiar, but I fail to place it, citizen. What more of them?"

"How should I know more of possible aristos,—I, who am a good patriot? I spit upon them all with a large inclusiveness," and he followed his sentiment with a deliberateness of aim that was scientifically exact. Despite distance, it fell with alarming nearness to the place where

monsieur was engaged with his breakfast, and, exasperated, he moved as if to leap to his feet; but Rosalie was swiftly between him and the aggressive expectorator, the fright and warning in her eyes sufficiently explicit to make him pause. She moved several dishes about, touching them with delicate coquetry.

"Oh, fie! Finished so soon! The citizen would leave at once?" and her voice was a masterpiece of raillery. "Eh, well, of course, if he must serve France as a good son he must never linger long, I suppose, even at the Red Cap, that harbors so many strong patriots. What a foolish one was Rosalie to think for an instant he could be detained. Now for the reckoning," and she began to count on very pretty, tapering fingers: "Two francs, and ten, and five more—how many is that, you two?" and she wheeled suddenly, with a flutter of skirts, upon the two listeners at the bar.

It required no mind-reader to comprehend that this was a warning, her method of pointing out the necessity for instant flight, if one cared for safety. Yet monsieur stopped to consider, while she and one of the men laughingly squabbled over the calculation. With her seeming friendliness, how far might she be trusted? Was her interest only to keep differences from the Red Cap? Who were these two of whom she kept so close a watch? But how far could he heed the warning, if he had interpreted aright her words and the glance that had accompanied them? Monsieur remembered that in the woods mademoiselle was waiting for food and that she must have time to rest before she could possibly continue the journey, save as an extreme necessity. Moreover, he desired feverishly to know who were these two travelers above

stairs with the familiar names. Monsieur, with eyes on the counting fingers, came to a decision.

"Alas, no, my little Rosalie, I am unfortunately here to keep an appointment that will hold me for some time. Let me have a room that is comfortable, and if one comes who asks for the advocate Henri Ramouillez, show him up. And with the room I must have an inkhorn, for I have much writing to be done before he comes."

He arose, shaking the crumbs from his clothing, and smilingly saluted the men.

"I give you both good-morning and a pleasant day, citizen-patriots," he said, and followed Rosalie, who was tripping gaily along the corridor, calling back to him a laughing invitation to follow quickly, as she had small time to attend even the best of patriots this morning.

"Will the citizen-advocate rest above or below?" she inquired coquettishly, pausing at a door, while she lifted pretty brows of inquiry.

For a moment more monsieur hesitated. Why should he trust her? Would a glance, a few words, constitute a declaration of interest in his fortunes at any other time or place? Yet she had seemed so watchful of the others, as if distrusting them. Was she after all a friend to the persecuted, this pretty little *grisette*, with the laughing lips and the empty head? And—through what other channel should he find food for mademoiselle, or obtain the coveted interview with the sick man?

"Monsieur is not satisfied with this accommodation?" cried Rosalie, in evident surprise at his hesitation. Monsieur came to a resolve, forced to it by the necessity for haste.

"I must see the sick traveler—quickly. Let me have

a word with you—anywhere." His voice was scarcely a whisper, but it reached her, for she shot toward him a glance, so searching, so freighted with both suspicion and confidence, that monsieur understood beyond any question that this woman had learned to read men's souls with a single look. He had but time to shudder at the vista that opened before him at thought of what must have been the experience that had brought to this young girl so accurate an insight into the purposes of men, when her confidence had fully conquered her suspicion and she nodded, with tight lips of determination. In a breath the look he had surprised on her face had vanished so completely that he feared that perhaps it had been but an evidence of his own strained imagination.

"Up-stairs you prefer?" and her voice was raised sufficiently to reach any listeners in the room they had quitted. "But the citizen-advocate must promise to be very quiet in his work and with his visitors, for the room we have is one close to where the sick man lies, and everything must be quiet for him."

She was tripping lightly up-stairs as she talked. At the top she turned to the right along a dark hallway with closed doors on either hand. Monsieur followed close, and Rosalie suddenly laughed outright in evident delight.

"Who would have suspected that you were so witty, my advocate?" she cried, though he had spoken not a word. "You are so deliciously witty with all your nonsense, enough to turn the head of a poor girl who might grow vain if she listened long." Silently, for a brief space she pointed at one of the closed doors, then turned and opened one directly across the hall. She stood aside as if to permit him to pass in for inspection, but as he

reached her she caught his sleeve with a grip that was persuasive. "I have your oath for good faith?" her voice brushed his ear like a gossamer thread.

He nodded, beckoning her to enter with him, but she released his arm and shook her head. For a moment more, while she talked of responsible things, the fluttering butterfly disappeared as if this quiet girl with the drawn brows had lived in an atmosphere of care and prudence all her life. She answered him in a whisper and she spoke with haste, following the words almost immediately with other, louder ones, perceptibly arranged for the entertainment of possible eavesdroppers.

"No, I must remain here where I can surprise any who may follow to learn our business. Speak quickly and close to my ear, and I will talk nonsense aloud while I listen. Do not fear. Training has taught me to do both cleverly." Then, aloud: "Let me see, is all in readiness for the citizen? Ah, the inkhorn he must have, of course, and what more?"

"I have a friend down the road who needs food at once," and monsieur's voice was little more than the moving of his lips, but she nodded.

"Ask for Pieter at the stable door," she advised in that soundless speech. Then, again aloud: "And with the inkhorn a couple of quills, maybe? We have a stable lad named Pieter who makes pens marvelously well. Will the citizen step down himself, by and by, and explain his requirements?" The citizen-advocate assured her aloud that he would surely do so.

She pointed again to the closed door and inquired: "What is the pressing need for seeing the sick one?"

"Life and death, perhaps, but I am not sure if he is the one I seek. Will you go with me and see for yourself?"

"No; but monsieur understands that there are many other ways to learn—accurately?" Her glance promised ability to accomplish anything in that line that she desired. Then, with a return to that laughing loudness: "The citizen wants water also? How much he wants! Well, give me the pitcher and I'll fill it, though the citizen must hereafter want fewer things, for a girl's time cannot be filled wholly with one who makes pretty speeches. Oh, ho! So the citizen wants to be alone, and must not be disturbed in his writing? Well, if the door is closed I'll leave the pitcher outside, but if open I will enter boldly—I or any other who may pass. The citizen will remember? And do not forget Pieter who makes such fine pens, and at so small a charge. And—this is a secret"—spoken aloud, however, with a laugh running through the words—"a centime comes to me from every order, so the citizen will promise not to forget?" and her laughter, as she ran down-stairs, was as light and gay as a feather that dances in the wind.

Monsieur waited to hear her welcomed in the ordinary, and still longer until he was sure that no one was stirring in the hall either above or below, then noiselessly he slipped across the passageway and tried the handle of the other door. It was locked, as he had expected, but he turned the knob again and again, hoping one or the other of the persons within would come near enough to hear his voice. Absolute stillness. He stooped and whispered a word through the keyhole.

"Franz," and again, after a space, "Franz."

Within he could hear a whispered consultation, then steps that hurried across the floor.

"What do you desire?" demanded a voice that, carefully lowered, seemed to be on a level with his own.

"Tell Franz it is Victor," monsieur whispered back. Instantly the key was turned and the door was opened a crack. The eyes of the person behind that crack narrowed to peer into the darkness of the hall; then, with a murmured exclamation of satisfaction, the door was opened, and with a rush monsieur was in the room. The man within waited only to lock the door before he caught monsieur's hand in a tight clasp.

"Victor, Victor; this is like a glimpse of heaven!" he said. "But how did you learn we were here?"

A voice from a bed in the corner rose now in a little cry.

"Ah, God is good! He sends you at last, at last! Now I shall be able to breathe again, knowing that she is not lost. Where is she—the countess?"

Monsieur came to the bed and took the feverish hand the other raised.

"Safe hidden, I am sure, waiting for the time to come when we can go forward again," he answered quietly. Then, "My poor Franz! How you have suffered!"

"Suffered!" De Beaurepeau passed his hand across his eyes as if he would hide forever the memory of it. "Every moment I have been on a rack, fearing that she had been trapped and captured. And while she was in danger I was tied to a bed, helpless! Sometimes it seemed past bearing. You, Victor, who could do things for her, you had the easy part."

"Surely, yes." Monsieur nodded, with eyes turned

toward the window. He seemed to travel far in the moment before he added again, as if thinking aloud: "Yes, I had the easy part."

"And all your life you have had the easy part in every way," pursued Franz, comparing his friend's lot rather enviously with his own. "When all others were battling with rebellious peasants there was no record of burnings and hangings and horrible kidnappings on your place."

To Victor, looking absently through the window, came vividly the many days spent in the saddle beside his father, when together they had crossed every inch of the estate, exhorting the loyal, promising reforms to the restless, strengthening the timid, exiling the rebellious, guiding all with a firm hand that was most kind in its very resoluteness. And to him came again those long nights, spent in poring over the books, learning page by page every asset, every responsibility; studying night after night to make a fair accounting to each laborer for the work done that day, dealing out justice with the right and power vested in him by law and his inheritance; satisfying by the utmost that was in both father and son the demands that kept every peasant in his place. And to outsiders, who could not look into those days and nights, it seemed monstrously easy.

"Yes, my life has been easy, in a way," he repeated. "But what my father did to make it easy no one can measure but his son who saw it done."

"You were always so strong, so equal to any demand," went on Franz, with an invalid's querulous following out of an idea. "When we were boys it was you who led us all to harebrained attempts of impossibilities that you

alone could carry out. Martignon here remembers it as well as I. Eh, Santon?"

De Martignon looked down upon him with a smile. "Of course I remember, but there's nothing in Victor's abilities to bring such a color into your face. You will have a return of the fever if you worry about what other people can do."

"But he can do what I would risk a year's life to be able to accomplish, and here I lie and can do nothing! It was this strength in him, that I felt could not fail, that made me select him when I was forced to entrust Mademoiselle de Lavarolle to some one. Ah, Victor! You can never guess what a comfort it has been to me, in my agony of suspense, to know that she was in the keeping of one who held me so close to his heart, who knew my love for her, who would plead for me if the opportunity ever came better than I could plead for myself."

For a single instant the room swam in a black cloud before Victor, a pall that undulated in every direction. He spread his feet wide apart, as if instinctively he were striving for balance.

"Yes, you are right; my life has been pitifully easy—thus far," he repeated, scarcely aware that he had spoken.

"And tell me," cried Franz, "she is well and safe? Ah! I would give my right hand for a look at her face this minute! For one moment when I might hold her hand fast to my heart!"

Monsieur roused. He turned to De Martignon.

"How were you able to save him?" indicating De Beaurepeau with a nod. "And how are you here?"

"After the disturbance at the Place de la Concorde,

two of his soldiers carried him out of the crush and were trying to take him to a place of safety when I chanced to look from my brother's window and beheld them. It was but an instant, of course, before I had all three in the house and had learned that Franz had been wounded at the scaffold. At that moment the first thing was to get a physician, and the soldiers on their way back sent me a good surgeon. He soon patched the knife-thrust in the thigh that had disabled Franz, and told me that absolute quiet and the absence of all visitors and excitement would soon set him on his feet again. But the instant he had gone De Beaurepeau, half wild with anxiety for the countess, told me the story and begged me to get him away from Paris and as far toward England as horses would carry us. I saw that opposition only increased his fever, and I went to the surgeon and obtained from him a paper declaring Franz unfit for duty.

"Armed with this I sought the colonel. He came to see Franz himself, and granted the sick-leave to extend indefinitely, until Franz should be fit for service, complimenting him meantime upon his gallant service at the guillotine. I saw De Beaurepeau writhe, while he talked, and before the colonel had gone he turned at the door just long enough to say, 'But in spite of your efforts, my dear boy, one of the prisoners escaped; I tell you this fearing that others might give you a wrong version of the affair and you might suppose that your superiors blamed you. She was a mere girl, they tell me, and of course she will be brought back almost immediately, for they are after her hotfoot. One of the wretched sufferers, a man named Policon, well known about the guillotine, was able, in spite of the fact that he had been nearly

cut through, to point the way that he had seen her go with a man. He said one of the Guard, but that is of course impossible, as every one of your detachment has been accounted for.' With another bit of advice not to worry, the colonel left us and then Franz would listen to nothing save an instant following. If the countess were seized on the road he fancied his uniform might perhaps save her, even if his sword were useless. No argument, no force—for you know Franz when he is aroused—would hold him and in a few hours we were following your trail, our passports easily obtained on the colonel's leave of absence.

"We heard of you from time to time, although we had to pick up what information we could without open questions, and we reached the Inn Du Peuple in time to learn of your narrow escape, and to find the place still in the throes of the excitement. A little lad who served in the house let fall that Brouillon himself was after you, and for a while Franz was in despair. From there on we lost you, and Franz has worried himself into a fever, fearing that all sorts of horrors had befallen the countess. I believe that your coming and the report that she is safe may save his life," and De Martignon smiled wearily, as if the other's disquiet had been wearing upon him as well.

"And now when will you take me to her?" cried Franz eagerly. "I shall be well enough soon to sit a horse—or, let her ride in the coach with me. No one would suspect."

Victor surveyed him with a puzzled look.

"Are you positively insane?" he said. "You would be wrecking your future and risking your life if it were

once suspected that you had ever known her, much less were you detected crossing France with her."

"What is life or future to me without her?" demanded Franz rather wildly.

"You should have thought of this before you left her and everything you loved to join the Guard," Victor reminded him mercilessly.

"But I was young then, and inexperienced, and I could not compare values," pleaded Franz, in self-justification. "And besides, if the test came again to-day, the result would be the same. I should have to crush my heart, and go to the aid of my suffering country, though since the day I joined the Guard I have seen the enemies of France often in the guise of her friends, tearing out her vitals to quarrel over them later among themselves. But for me, there is only one France and I owe her all that I have, first and always. Yet, while I give her my youth and my fortune, and if necessary my life, my soul is yearning for one woman—one who used to be my very own.

"I thought that I had lived down much of that old pain. I had not seen her for three years, and I believed that I could control the bleeding of my heart. Then I heard of her imprisonment, and my brain was aflame. I sent for you—and you know the rest. But you do not know what that day at the guillotine meant to me, nor the moment when, as I lifted her down—her last moment as she thought—she scorned me with a look that pierced my very soul! Yes, yes, I know that neither of you can understand. You would have to love her as desperately as I, and just as absorbingly, to enter into any of my suffering. Oh, sometimes I cannot bear it!

My very manhood is gone! That the last look I may ever see in her eyes was one of loathing! I must see her! I must hear her say that she knows and has forgiven me. Oh, if you call yourselves friends, do not deprive me of this one small request. Any hour may be my last, or hers! Any moment may take her out of my reach forever. Have you no pity? God in heaven, soften their hearts!"

In the fervor of his pleading he was lashing himself into a dangerous condition that no new wound would tolerate. Monsieur and De Martignon alike tried in vain to quiet him.

"What do you think?" murmured De Martignon at last, in an aside to Victor. Monsieur frowned, standing with folded arms to look down upon the invalid, who, childishly persistent, kept reiterating his demand.

"I think it extremely dangerous to attempt to have mademoiselle come here, and at present it is impossible to take him to her." Then, in a last effort, monsieur leaned over the bed.

"Why do you not love this woman sufficiently to deny yourself?" he asked with a certain Spartan quality in his voice.

Franz lifted his feverish eyes. "Put yourself in my place," he pleaded, "if you can, and fancy yourself dying and the woman you love better than life kept from you by others."

Monsieur came slowly to an upright position. As he turned away, Franz sent a last appeal after him.

"I implore you to tell her that I am here, dying perhaps—dying surely if she does not come. Leave the decision to her. I know so well what she will say."

"So do I—that's just the trouble," cried Victor, turn-

ing quickly. "I do not think it is right to rest our responsibility on her shoulders. It is our business to protect her from herself, if necessary."

Franz twisted in bed, as if from pain. "I gave her into your keeping: I demand her now from you, just for a moment—it is so little! It is like the drop of water on the tongue of one in hell. How can I be sure that she is safe until I have seen her with my own eyes? Oh, God! Perhaps they are hiding her death from me at this very moment!" He cast off the bedclothes and sought to rise.

De Martignon pushed him back and, holding him, spoke over his shoulder to Victor.

"Bring her to-night at any cost. His reason is going and he may betray us with a single rash word. Think how loud he has been! Heavens! Perhaps we are done for now! The safety of the countess as well depends upon quieting his ravings, and demands that she come here."

Monsieur crossed the room with set lips. "I will consult her and if she so wills she shall be here close after dark."

Turning, he unlocked the door, and closed it softly after him.

CHAPTER X

THE GHOST OF THE RUINED CHURCH

MONSIEUR, returning to his room, found the door closed, that he remembered he had left ajar. He was so occupied, however, with the plans for the dangerous work ahead of him, that it was not until he had crossed the room toward the toilet table that he recalled the fact that he had not obeyed Rosalie's covert warning regarding open doors. Half absently he peered into the pitcher to make sure that it had been filled, his mind touched with vague uneasiness aroused by De Martignon's words about the loudness of their late interview; then, instantly, his attention passed to a new objective, for floating on the surface of the water in the pitcher lay a bit of paper. When he had drawn it forth he found that it had been protected from the water ingeniously by a thin coating of candle wax. He read the faint tracings several times.

"At the Red Cap travelers are esteemed patriots until eyes and ears, long trained to detection, discover the contrary. Vigilance is the watchword of the Red Cap."

There was no signature, but monsieur had small hesitation in placing it at Rosalie's door, and while he admired its cleverly contrived hiding-place, he also was aware that a thing of this kind was doubtless of frequent use here, and it argued a danger that was imminent. If the mysterious sender had not felt the need for an immediate warning, he or she would hardly have risked his or her safety to point out in this way the need for cau-

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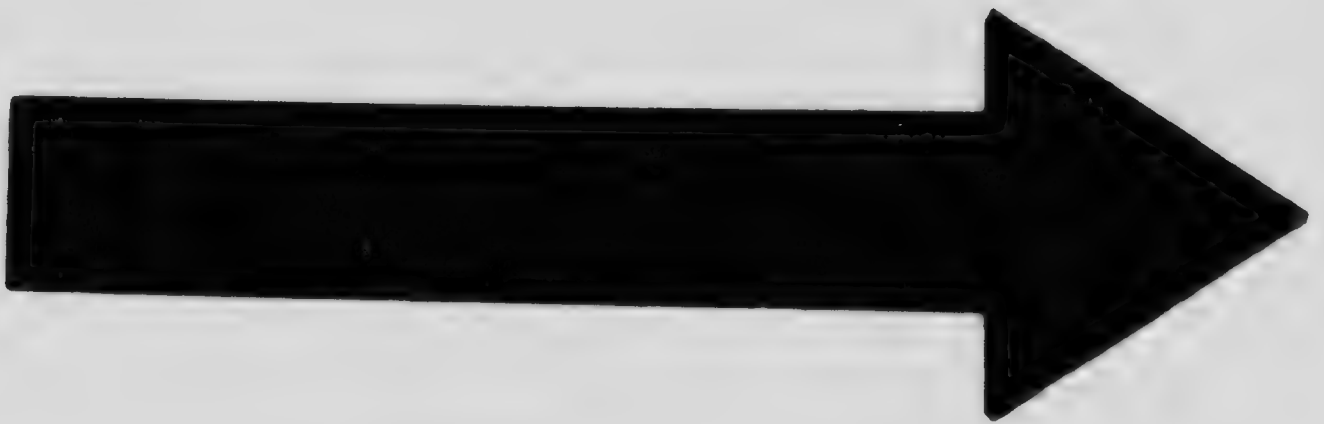
tion. But, was it a friendly warning or a threat? Monsieur saw that it was so framed that it might serve as a bit of party politics should it fall into the hands of either party, while there remained the equal chance that to both it might smell of sedition. But what had occurred that was a new menace? Lighting a candle monsieur took a first precaution of consuming the paper, and scattering the filmy ash, that no smallest trace should remain to betray a kindness that had offered the warning.

Then, catching up his hat, he covered the stairs rapidly and entered the breakfast room. He felt a sudden relief to find it empty, and crossing it in long, quick strides, he was out-of-doors. Turning to the left and following a path that skirted the cabaret itself, he reached the stables at the rear, an irregular pile of buildings annexed to the main house, and overgrown with a twisted vine that had begun to loosen a yellow greenness along its tendrils, and which, in summer, must convert the place into a veritable hill of green, monsieur fancied.

In the open door, as he neared it, a young man was leaning, a burly giant with the shoulders of an ox and a great mane of tawny hair that half overhung his eyes. He surveyed monsieur as he approached without comment, without apparent emotion of any kind, even that which mere curiosity at the entrance of an unknown person usually brings to an onlooker. Perfectly stolid and expressionless, he waited for monsieur to open his business.

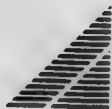
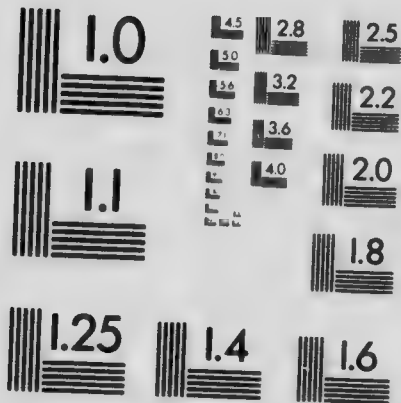
"I am looking for one, Pieter, who makes pens," monsieur began.

The other nodded and spat once into the litter of the yard.



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"Perhaps I have the pleasure of addressing the citizen himself?" and although monsieur's voice was merely that of a casual questioner, his eyes were alert.

The man expectorated as before and again merely nodded. He withdrew his eyes from monsieur's, however, and moved them indifferently around the yard. Yet, deftly as was the glance tuned to a complete indifference, monsieur saw it pause the smallest fraction of a breath in its wandering, before it returned to his own face. Monsieur, following up the fancied hesitation of the stable man, discovered his late acquaintance of the barroom, the more voluble one of the two, seated on a side porch near the rear of the house, apparently intent on the filling of a very black pipe. Thereupon monsieur's eyes came back in a flash to the face of the stable man, and he saw a glow in the eyes of the giant, as if he were aware of monsieur's discovery and of monsieur's appreciation of his service as one who warns.

Yet the man was seated quite out of hearing of any ordinary speech, but monsieur remembered that ears had a trick of growing immeasurably long of late, and he was careful to lower his voice a trifle, though avoiding anything that might appear to suggest an intention to do so.

"I need—pens," monsieur remarked and surveyed the giant with a look that matched his own in indifference.

"For yourself alone?" inquired Pieter, with meaning.

"For another—hidden—and two horses," returned monsieur instantly, and with that careless air.

Pieter drew some quills from his pocket and a knife.

"Hard or soft?—Where?" The last scarcely a breath.

Monsieur did not answer immediately, and he stood

whipping the straw at his feet with a light switch he had broken from a shrub. How far dare he trust this man, whose only guarantee of good faith was the word of a girl whom he had never seen until that morning, and who could have no personal interest in his fortunes? What had he to build on save a few glances and words that might be a trap? On the other hand, what was left save absolute trust? He had gone too far to hold back now, and he must risk all on the chance.

"In the woods west of the village."

"Very good. I understand that the citizen desires hard pens,—for a man friend, the citizen said?"

"No," monsieur met the eyes of the other firmly, yet with a resolve that he was not aware shone there. "No,—a woman."

The faintest shade of what monsieur unexpectedly recognized as pity crossed the face of the uncouth man before him, and was instantly gone.

"The pens will take some time to fashion carefully, and meantime the citizen-advocate is out for a walk for his health?" inquired Pieter, his eyes and fingers busy with his task. "There is much of interest in these parts, if the citizen enjoys the country, and at the spot where the church lane meets the main road there are some—fossils—that might interest the citizen. Under the bushes—yes, exactly, the citizen understands that we do not keep our—fossils—for any one to steal." Pieter lifted his voice now a trifle, and monsieur became instinctively aware that Pieter desired all persons within a radius of several metres to enjoy his conversation if they liked. "Yes, as the citizen says, the land used to belong to the church, and the church road comes into the main

one on the right a short stretch beyond the last house. The citizen is interested in holy relics? There used to be some within the church that paid one for a visit, but now that the *curé* has gone and the people worship Reason, why should one find interest in relics? May the destroyers who sacked the church obtain in the next world the rich reward they have earned in this!"

Yet, though Pieter held his eyes resolutely to his task, and his voice was carefully controlled, monsieur had no difficulty in feeling the real intent that lay behind the wish. It instantly confirmed him in his trust.

Now the man on the porch, having filled and lighted his pipe to his satisfaction, arose and sauntered toward the speakers.

"What, Pieter, another order for pens?" he inquired. "For you business seems always prospering when others are going hungry for lack of work."

"Every one nowadays needs a pen, Citizen Pinoche," returned Pieter quietly. "The citizen-advocate has ordered four."

"But that is prodigality and wastefulness," commented the smoker without hesitation, evidently too accustomed to criticize others to comprehend now that his interference was objectionable.

"Hardly," and monsieur forced a laugh while his fingers tingled, "for Pieter makes them better than another and I write much, as the citizen must of course be aware. And, now, lest there be some mistake, let me be sure that I have the directions: the church lane leads directly from the highway, you said, Pieter? Thank you, I believe I'll take a look at it."

"And I'll go with you," offered Citizen Pinoche af-

fably. "I haven't seen the place myself since the good patriots raided it last All Saints' Eve. Ah ——! How glorious was the Carmagnole, danced within the altar rail itself! The old superstition defied and crushed forever! It was a sight never to be forgotten."

"That I can perfectly understand," agreed monsieur, as they passed through the gate and took the road.

"As I said, it was the Eve of All Saints," continued the other, pursuing his reminiscences with delight. "We had been listening for several days to the urging of a great orator who was staying at the home of Louis Dalfe, a farmer who lives beyond the village, and who has done much toward freeing the people from their bigotry and narrowness. This orator was a friend of his, a great man from Paris; Brouillon was his name, Jacques Brouillon. A little man, brought up by the *ci-devant* Duke du Marsillac near St. Omer, I've heard. The citizen had heard of Brouillon, perhaps?"

"It is a name known from one end of France to the other, citizen. Few have failed to hear it."

"But have you heard him speak to the people? No? Such a pity, for when he addresses them he would melt a man of stone. He speaks softly-like, just the way a cat purrs, and he purrs his way to one's very heart-strings, and plays upon them until they sing to breaking."

"Very wonderful, surely," assented monsieur.

"And on the Eve of All Saints he was at his very best. Marvelous—grand! He had been riding about all day, calling upon each man and woman to rise and demand liberty for themselves and for the countless millions still unborn who would sing unending praises to those who had wrenched power from the tyrants. Every

one who listened burned to do something. By nightfall the people were mad for blood and made more savage by the remembrance that every vile aristo within a day's march had fled long before—curse them all! But the church remained, and Brouillon pointed out to us that we might glut our righteous bloodthirst there. At first some held back. The *curé* was old and he had married and buried us all for as long back as we could remember, and a foolish pity seemed for a while to weaken some hearts. But Brouillon soon convinced them of their lack of patriotism.

“Had not that same *curé* asked every mass for the feeding of his poor people with sous that the others must give? Did not all know that the church had joined the aristo-tyrants in trying to crush the peasants with unjust taxes and the like? A roar came from every throat. Then the great Brouillon pointed out that the *curé* who served the church and the tyrants must serve as a sacrifice-offering on the altar of liberty, and that women and children should join the men in exterminating carrion that defiled the doors of the home. In a moment every hand had found a torch or a knife. Roaring our joyful devotion we followed Brouillon—but when we came to the church, alas, only two lads were there, who fled at the sound of our singing. Too late we remembered that the old *curé* had gone on a mission the day before to some place far away. The people were justly enraged. They desired to burn down the church, but Brouillon held them back.

“No, for then the old fox will never return, and we shall lose the pleasure of offering that sacrifice. Wait for him, track him, lure him hither, and then fling your-

seives upon him.' That was Brouillon's wise counsel and the people listened. But while we waited Brouillon pointed out that we had time to take for our own use whatever the church contained, for never again would we have need of what it could give in the way of service, we, who were freed from superstition and the tyranny of the church. He led the way himself, and when all had gathered what each could, and the place was stripped bare, not so much as a candle left, we danced! Ah——! How they danced! How they flung themselves with fury everywhere! Little children who leaped until they could no longer stand! Men—women—old and young—ah, how grand and never-to-be-forgotten!"

"Most—diverting," commented monsieur with tight lips. "And of course the *curé* was afterward taken?"

"Alas, no. We are still looking for him. They say he was warned on his way home, and he has never found courage to return. But we do not despair. Travelers come and go often at the Red Cap, and although Rosalie is a flighty thing, madame keeps a firm hand over her and madame is a patriot to the tips of her toes. Dalfe has hinted that madame is always ready to turn a cent, even if an aristo or a suspect offers it, but—absurd! madame's only son died for his country and was among the first of the recruits to cross the border when the call came for the sons of the Republic to defend her. It is like heresy to accuse madame, and she will tell us without fail when the *curé* comes, as come he must. Why, his whole life was spent here. He cannot keep away forever."

"Naturally," commented monsieur, again.

They walked a step or two in silence.

"And Brouillon himself has promised to come again, soon perhaps, but they keep him so busy in Paris, hunting heads for the guillotine that, *parbleu!* he can find no time for himself or his friends."

"And he is one of the ablest butchers among the many there," monsieur remarked.

Pinoche turned quickly. "Butchers? That smacks of aristo-talk, citizen. It fits not easily on the shoulders of an advocate who has sworn to serve the people."

"But do not sheep require butchers?" inquired monsieur calmly, meeting the other's eyes. "Who can feed the people save the butchers who kill the sheep? Aristos nowadays—what are they but so many sheep, crowded into pens, awaiting the butchers? If one of them now could only be spurred to some sort of rebellion, what fun would be doing, eh? But not one, not one with the valor of a sheep! If such stories as yours cannot arouse them, what are they made of, eh?"

The bitterness in his voice was wholly lost upon Pinoche, to whom the figure of speech had conjured up a hundred pleasing possibilities.

"True; but, as you say, they have not the spirit of sheep to resist, and if one so much as showed himself, stst! bang! And off would fly his head. They know that too well to trust even a hair near Paris. Take this *ci-devant* Duke du Marsillac, for instance, he who owned half the country up there in the north, they say, and in spite of his aristo blood his people still worship him, and did his father before him. Yet, god or devil, worship or no worship, he has traitorously fled."

"Indeed, that is news," returned monsieur, evidently much impressed. "When did he go, and where?"

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"For above a fortnight none have seen him. I'll tell you a secret, for it can do no harm to tell one whose business it is as an advocate to keep his mouth shut. Brouillon was sent on a mission to St. Omer some days ago, and he it was who discovered the absence of the tyrant. He hates the family with the hatred of one who must carry all his life the injury that one of the name inflicted."

"Indeed? Most interesting," murmured monsieur politely.

"The citizen knows the story?"

"Something concerning the limp, I assume?"

"Yes. The late duke ran over him when he was a small child, he says, and Brouillon has pledged his soul to cure that limp with the blood of all to the last of the name."

"Such a cure might seem quite satisfying," agreed monsieur. "And it is to be supposed that he has tried?"

"Several times. I have it from his friend Dalfe—that was Dalfe with me in the ordinary this morning, but perhaps you did not notice him—and Dalfe says that Brouillon never loses sight of his plan for a single second. He has seen Brouillon's eyes grow red often at the mere sound of the hated name. Ah, Brouillon's hate is not like that of a common man. It was the crowning shame of his life that the old duke died in his bed, and that his people could not be induced to rise against him. But Brouillon does not despair. The son is not old, and it takes much to kill the young and the strong. Some day the people will remember that a hated aristo still lives in France, defying them, and Brouillon has promised that he will lead a mob all the way from Paris to St.

Omer to seize this . rant, if no nearer means can be found."

"Doubtless he is quite equal even to that," acquiesced monsieur. "Ah! This must be the lane the stable man named."

They turned into it as he spoke, and side by side they passed along its length, the ground soft and yielding, the trees on either hand breaking into new, glad green.

Monsieur let his eyes wander among these trees, and the pale yellow-green shrubs, all so young and fresh, that third day of April, as men measure time. How far away the last day of March seemed now! He tried not to think of the girl waiting in the other woods, listening for every sound, marveling that he could be so long away. Everything about him spoke of young life and smiling peace, no hint in it anywhere of the tragedy that lurked behind every stone, and under every sod. Even this man who walked beside him was the very embodiment of that threatened horror, one who was engaged heart and soul in that pitiless warfare upon the weak, yet who spoke in the tongue that other men used, and looked very much as other men had looked before these years of sacrilege and sacrifice had turned France into a shambles.

"Life seems so young and fair even now," monsieur reflected, "and it is not possible that so exquisite a thing should be lost because a mob of insane beings so order! A just God could not permit it!"

Yet, even as the revolt rose in his heart, he remembered that a just God was permitting it, every day, every hour, over and over again, and back there in the woods waited one who might at any moment be snatched away

to take her place among the sheep that were waiting the pleasure of the butchers. His teeth tightened and the tense muscles showed hard and big in his cheek.

Pinoche, unaware of his listener's self-absorption, babbled on regarding the church that now loomed before them; of its erstwhile sanctity, now forever overthrown, and the sure fate awaiting the ungrateful *curé*, should he ever return. Monsieur came back slowly to a recognition of his immediate surroundings. Everywhere about the entrance of the building were evidences of neglect. Bits of sodden curtains and broken picture-frames lay scattered, half trodden into the mire. Deep wheel ruts scored the turf in every direction, and the shattered windows were like blind eyes that could not hide their pain.

"And this occurred only a few months ago?" monsieur inquired as he entered the place, whose floor echoed his steps.

"Ah, much can be done in a little time by the people when they rise to right their wrongs," Pinoche assured him. "And in those months not a single prayer has been offered here; we may congratulate ourselves for that coward *curé*—ha! What's that?"

He gripped monsieur's arm in undisguised fright, and half sank to his knees, for before a small picture on the altar, flanked on either side by a bunch of half-torn flowers, a figure was kneeling, whose white head was lifted, eyes looking upward above hands that held a crucifix.

"The ghost of the *curé*!" cried Pinoche, and, avowed disbeliever as he had claimed to be, he nevertheless crossed himself with a devoutness that his earlier devotions had usually lacked.

But now the figure rose, and turning faced the intruders, even taking a step toward them as with hand lifted in benediction, it said gently:

"No, you mistake, son. This is the house of God, and not a day in these months has passed without a prayer lifted here to the dear God who knows all our sorrows. You have come to add your prayers to mine?"

But the *curé* in the flesh was far less to be feared than a mysterious *curé* of the spirit, and the confidence of Pinoche immediately reasserted itself. He laughed loudly, the relief unmistakable, and he summoned his lost valor with the savage instinct of a weak nature that has obtained the upper hand.

"The citizen-*curé* forgets that the church and its prayers are out of fashion now. A man who loves his country prays La Guillotine to deliver him from its enemies—even such enemies as those in cassock and stole."

The old man smiled indulgently, as an adult reads the fancy of a child and measures its inconsequence.

"Ah, Pinoche, ever ferocious in your faith, whether you worship God or country," he said. "I remember that even when you were a little lad you liked best the sermons that promised everlasting fire to unbelievers. What a little savage lad you used to be! And tell me, how is Elize and little Geoffrey? He must be grown a great man in these months."

There was no hint of tremor or personal anxiety in the quiet old face, only that smiling interest in the things that interested most this son. Monsieur, knowing that the *curé* must be aware of the danger that was closing around him, watched him curiously.

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Pinoche, visibly softened for a moment, mumbled that both wife and child were well.

"And this other, your friend?" continued the *cure*, as if monsieur were also a close interest to Pinoche, turning mild eyes upon the newcomer. "He is a guest in Faree Village?"

But the reference to a stranger, especially one who had been the recipient of his recent confidences regarding the extermination of the *cure*, reminded Pinoche of the need for care, and he explained to him with ostentatious appropriation of the honor of having discovered this stranger.

"This is the Citizen Henri Ramouillez, a traveler but this morning arrived at the Red Cap, and he awaits a friend from Doullen. I am showing him the points of interest, while he so waits."

The old man regarded the advocate gravely, and after a moment offered his hand.

"If you are come in peace, my son, we give you welcome, for Faree never withheld its welcome from any stranger in times past; if you are come to destroy the happiness of this innocent place, as others have come and tried before you, let me pray you most earnestly to spare these, my children, and to go in peace on your way. They are so headstrong and so confiding, my poor little ones, and they listen to any who has a voice and a persuasion, most of all to one who, knowing their ignorance and trustfulness, plays upon them for evil. So, if you have bad thoughts, go, my son, and may God keep you. If you mean us well, stay, and we will share with you all that we have. Do I not speak for us all, Pinoche?"

But Pinoche was growing more and more convinced that there was some undercurrent that he did not understand. The stranger might so easily detect any weakness and report it to others. Pinoche had practiced things of this sort so often himself that they became more than a possibility now in this unknown other. And, moreover, suppose that any one came and found him here with the proscribed *curé*, what could save him then? To be accused of conspiring with the church against the state—he, Pinoche, the ardent Republican? The thought blanched his face. Turning, he found monsieur surveying him with a smile that seemed to intimate that he, this stranger, had plumbed Pinoche's inmost thought. Ah! This man was a spy, perhaps, come to test the people of Faree! Pinoche must lose no time in showing his ardor for the cause.

Yet his voice perceptibly shook in fear that was not for the fate of the *curé*, as he mumbled something about work to be done, and turned toward the door. And then, in the drawing of a single breath, his worst fears were realized, for the stranger, suddenly become terrible with new authority, slipped between Pinoche and the door and his face was of a dreadful grimness.

"No, my friend, your delicate purpose of warning the patriots of the presence of your *curé* is a thought too late. The capture is for me, not for you. Did I not say that I awaited a friend from Doullen? Fool! Do you think I would tell my business aloud for any to hear? Who would let me come alone if they had so much as suspected that I had been sent with the purpose of securing the *curé*? Bah! The people in the north must indeed be as blind as moles."

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Pinoche stuttered pitiably. Anything, anything that the good citizen found advisable he would gladly carry out. Yes, yes, indeed the people of Faree were idiots, and himself greater than they, not to have detected at once the citizen's greatness. Indeed, that very morning he had himself remarked to Dalse that the citizen might be other than he had seemed, but Dalse would not listen. Dalse was ever so pig-headed and blind.

Monsieur laughed biting. "And now you fear that it is for the pig-headed Dalse to crow, eh? That is the smart, of course; but not so fast, my good Pinoche. Neither Dalse nor any other is to know aught of what has occurred until I say so, you hear?" Monsieur strode a step nearer and Pinoche promptly recoiled. "My plans," went on monsieur, as if he had not seen the other's trepidation, "are not yet all complete, and absolute silence is the price you will pay with your head until I give you permission to speak. So much as a whisper—so much as a look—indeed, if I hear a breath from others I shall attribute it to you, and Brouillon shall be told. You know somewhat of Brouillon's ways, and do you think that he will wait to hear excuses or explanations? Why, Dalse himself would not dare to so much as hazard a look in your defense, and you know that without my telling."

Pinoche, with a cry, fell on his knees and gripped monsieur's coat with trembling hands.

"Oh, mercy, mercy, dear citizen-advocate! The whole of Picardy has not one so strong in love for the Republic as I—I, Pinoche! I will not look, I will not breathe—I will turn earth and heaven to aid the good citizen in the noble work of extermination. Ah, believe me! Trust me! Let my soul burn forever if I am not true to

monsi—that is, to the dear and noble citizen-advocate, who has come so far to aid us!”

Monsieur touched him with his boot. For an instant he looked as if his very soul had sickened at the words of Pinoche.

“Get up,” he said, “and listen to what I have to say. You were long ago pointed out to me by—one who shall be nameless. He told me that in an emergency I might rely upon your fidelity to the Republic. Let me see if he was right. I have permitted you to witness this capture, but I must complete my plans before I exhibit them, for I am here upon other matters as well, and there is more beneath this thing than you could dream. Understand that where I choose to hide my prisoner is my own affair, and you are to forget that you have either eyes or ears. Furthermore, you are to abandon any smallest scrap of brains that is not wholly devoted to the serving of your country, and incidentally to the keeping of your head out of the basket. Go through the door yonder, and walk exactly fifteen paces and stop; but do not turn around, or listen if the *curé* cries out, for you can understand that I may have need to test him somewhat. Any noise here is not for your ears. Is that perfectly plain?”

“Yes, yes, oh, perfectly,” assented Pinoche hastily.

“Your further business is to keep others away. Any pretext will do that is plausible. If I do not join you at the end of one hour you are free to go to your home but nowhere else, remember, and you may go there without coming in here. There, within those four walls you must remain until this hour to-morrow, unless I have need of you, when I must have you surely there to re-

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ceive my message and any whom I may send. There must be no question about this part. You understand? There is no possibility of a mistake? Then go, but do not so much as whisper that you have been here, and do not know me should we meet unless you have heard something in the interval that I should hear. In that event you may send some one to the Red Cap for me, but you must not leave your house on any pretext; is that plain?"

Pinoche was off like the wind and the two left behind could hear him count aloud the fifteen paces. Monsieur looked from the doorway to make sure that he was in the place appointed, and then he softly closed and barred the door.

Returning, he moved swiftly down the aisle to where the *curé* awaited him, and monsieur saw that, although the other had not moved, his face expressed neither fear nor curiosity, rather a quiet acceptance of the immediate future, whatever that might be. Monsieur was still smiling a little as he reached him.

"That idiot is like a rock in the path," he said; "if he can only be made to remain a rock for even a little time—just long enough to let us get away."

But the *curé* merely looked at him without comment, waiting.

"Dear father," cried monsieur, with a convincing earnestness, "I carry no proof of my loyalty, and I have nothing to convince thee of my good intentions. Yet I am one hunted like thyself, and I could not stand aside and see the dogs bring thee down. Oh, God! God! Where are Thy sons, the men of France, that they can endure these things?" He covered his eyes with his

hands, for a moment overwhelmed with the nearness of the horror that, it seemed, was engulfing the whole earth in its fury. After a long moment the *curé* laid a hand on his shoulder.

"My son, thou dost well to call upon the dear Father of us all, who alone can help," he said. "I have no choice but to believe thee, for what would it profit me to disbelieve? Trust or no trust, the result is the same. If thou meanest well, I may live to serve my poor children a little longer, if thou hast an evil heart, then God considers that my life is no longer of use to Him here, and He will take me home. What does it matter whether I die in my bed or on the scaffold? God will keep me here just as long as He needs me, and neither thou nor I can dictate to Him. If He has sent thee to me with good intent, I thank Him nevertheless, for life is foolishly dear even to one so old as I."

Monsieur dropped to his knees and bowed his head. "I ask for thy blessing, father. Could I accept it if I meant thee any ill?"

"Dear God, how good Thou art!" cried the *curé*, and when the blessing had been given, and monsieur raised his eyes, he saw that the old face was brightened as if a light shone there. It was evident that in this experience the *curé* had seen only a new evidence of the kindness that never sleeps.

But monsieur, on his feet, showed something of the anxiety that had been his portion for so long.

"Father, I need thy help for another, one who, like thyself, must hide. If thou hast stayed here undetected all these months, let this one who is in my care share

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thy hiding-place until night comes to cover her going. She ——"

"Ah, my son, a woman, hiding and in distress? A daughter of the village yonder?"

"No, father, a young girl who escaped from Paris three days ago, and whose only offense is that of birth, for she was born of noble blood. Thus far we have come safely on our way to Calais—and England; but the fiends are following close and we are waiting here only long enough to give her strength to ride on. I have been to the Red Cap trying to get food for her, and Pieter directed me to search in the bushes at the head of the lane, but that beast Pinoche came too, and I could not look."

"Yes, yes, the dear Pieter! Every day he comes and leaves in those bushes all that I desire. He dares not venture nearer, fearing that his footsteps in the mud might be a betrayal of my hiding-place, but after dark, every night, I venture out, going through the fields so as to leave no footprints, and bring the food and the blankets and all the good things here. Ah, you cannot measure how good he has been, and madame, and the little Rosalie! They warned me upon my return of what had happened, and they have kept me alive since, those three. May all the angels guard them, those three loyal, kindly, generous hearts!"

Monsieur told him very briefly what he had known of the same humanity, but he asked the *curé* how it had been possible for them to escape detection.

"Madame Ramille keeps the Red Cap alone as a haven for those who are assailed by the storms outside. She was the daughter of one Dieter, a jeweler of Paris,

a man of much wealth, who had known all the court beauties in his day. Madame, when she came to Faree the wife of our innkeeper, brought with her a memory of all those great ones and a heart that was filled with a loving kindness for rich and poor alike. When her husband died she still kept the inn, and when, long after, the Revolution came, madame's only son went to Belgium and was lost there, fighting for his country. That loss has made her invulnerable to any suspicion. So, with love and pity for both sides in the great struggle, madame keeps her house open for any one who is in distress, and is herself accounted a patriot, although she will suffer no discussion of politics under her roof, and although she holds resolutely to her title, in order that any fleeing noble may be attracted by it as to a possible refuge. Madame is firm even to a severe austerity, but with a heart so great and so wise."

Monsieur, reminded of the flight of time, stepped to the door and, unlocking it, peered through. Yes, Pinoche was still there, a lion in the way of intruders, but a very uncertain lion, if aught transpired to arouse his suspicion. So far, so good. Monsieur returned to the *curé*.

"Is there any way out save through yonder door? And how may I reach the woods and return with my charge undetected?"

"Beneath the altar itself is a little space where I hide by day and sleep at night," returned the *curé*. "It was just a hole until the good Pieter cut a door for me at the side and now it is home. See," and he drew outward one of the panels beneath the steps.

A black space yawned within, and although the *curé* promised light in a moment monsieur was too anxious

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to reach his charge to accept his host's invitation for inspection.

"And this connects, you see, with a passage to the postern door that was rarely used in the old days, never by any other than myself. It is much overgrown fortunately and the woods are beyond. Through them you will have to find your way to your charge, my son. Bring her here and knock thrice; such a precaution does Rosalie herself employ when she comes."

"Be sure, father, that I will return with her as soon as may be, but meantime I must get that donkey of a Pinoche out of the way. We have no choice but to trust him, for if we tied him here his wife would raise the alarm and all would be lost. When mademoiselle is safe here with you I will go to the Red Cap and arrange with Pieter and Rosalie for your escape as well as our own."

The *curé* smiled. "Ah, son, how could I desert my place here, and the few children who need me? The loyal ones who know that I am here come to me with all their sorrows and joys, and I alone can give them absolution for their sins through the right vested in me by the church. What would life be worth to me that was spent away from my rightful place? I should know no peace or rest, and truly I should be the coward the zealots think me if I deserted. By and by this great bloodshed and horror will be over and I must be here when that time comes, thou seest?"

"Truly, thou art strong of heart, father, and the way of action and defiance is so much easier than the quiet courage that waits without an outward tremor in the homely, everyday place. Such patience is far beyond

my attaining. In action alone can I find any rest, any peace, misnomer as both seem. The very thought of thy waiting endurance shakes my courage."

The *curé* again gently touched him in benediction as he smiled.

"Once, ah, once, so long ago, I was young like thee; headstrong, surging with life and passion, and all the strong things of youth. But I have lived long and learned many things since that time. Wait until the years are as many for thee as they have been for me, and thou wilt look upon the years remaining through other eyes. It is only a different form of struggle—not surrender nor defeat, much less going down without having fought something of a fight. The fight is none the less a battle because it is waged, not against ignorant, helpless peasants, nor for the mere saving of one's life, but against the sinful longings within one's own breast."

Monsieur smiled in return. "The way through such a battle to such an end seems very long, and oh, very, very far off, father."

Across the *curé's* face a shadow fell, and his eyes were dark with what seemed an old, familiar pain.

"My son, I have not asked thee why thou art trying to save the life of this woman whom thou art serving, for that is no part of my office. But I know that thou art risking thine own life for hers, and I know too that though life is very dear to youth, thank God a man carries it lightly and lays it down gladly when love calls. If she is no more to thee than any other woman and thou art only serving all women in serving her, then I know that God will thank and bless thee in manifold ways. But if thy big heart is bound up in her little one, if her

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loss would darken all the world for thee until even the dear Father Himself would seem a long, long way off, only to be found after weary groping—then God will pity thee and send thee endurance and patience, as He sent them to me long ago, my son, oh, very long ago when I was as young as thou art now, but not so strong of heart."

Monsieur felt a sudden tightness in his throat; so real, so dreadfully near had suddenly come this pain that the other had felt; so close, perhaps, was coming this lesson that the other had learned. Monsieur spoke with a passion that was the unmistakable cry of a soul that understood what this suffering might be that the other had experienced.

"Pray God that He spare me a teaching such as this! For, strong as I am, there are some things that I cannot even think of without shrinking—some things that I could not live and bear!"

CHAPTER XI

NEW DANGERS

EVEN when monsieur's foot was on the path behind him Pinoche did not turn, and monsieur smiled in a certain grim satisfaction. So far the frightening process certainly had held good.

"Come, Pinoche," he ordered, "I must get back to the Red Cap for I have much to do there and the time is short."

"And I shall wait here and guard——?" Pinoche tossed his head backward toward the church.

"The *curé*? Bless your slumbering wits, friend, and do you really believe that I would leave him there for any to find who might chance this way?" Monsieur laughed in derision. "I have sent him to a good hiding-place in the care of a couple of *gens d'armes* I had in waiting out of sight. By and by I will join them, when my plans are completed. You perceive that when the time comes, others may need to go with them—others who babble inconsiderately what is not to be told."

Pinoche stole a look sideways and monsieur met the look and smiled a little.

"Exactly, friend Pinoche. I perceive that you are quite as acute as I was informed. Continue to practice your wisdom. The wise man, you remember, is said to be he who opens wide his eyes and ears and locks his mouth."

Pinoche nodded with the aspect of a sage, but he offered no comment, and for some time they moved along the road without further speech; monsieur so absorbed in turning and twisting a hundred plans to reach mademoiselle without exciting suspicion, that he did not hear at first the strokes of a horse's feet on the highway behind them.

It was Pinoche who called his attention to the approaching rider by a half backward twist and then an instant return to his original position of eyes front.

"The citizen-advocate does not object, perhaps, if I observe who is coming?" he inquired, and monsieur, awakening, turned with a start to see both horse and rider outlined against the sky on the crest of the rise in the road beyond the church.

"Is he known hereabouts?" monsieur inquired, and tried to appear unconcerned. Both stopped, turned, and watched the horseman approach. He had been riding hard, and appeared to have covered a long distance in haste, for now that he was at hand his face was seen to be grimed with the dust of the road, and looked worn, with circles of fatigue beneath the alert eyes.

Monsieur, before the man had hailed them, felt suddenly at bay. Something in the rider's face warned him without need for speech that now the hounds were closing in very fast. For a single instant an apprehension for mademoiselle, waiting alone and unprotected in the woods, shook him; then he realized that if he were taken, the *curé*, suspecting calamity of some sort, might still save her, and some word might be sent to Pieter. Moreover, there was De Martignon! The hounds might not be so sure of their victim after all.

"In the name of the Republic!" shouted the rider and checked his horse.

"What news?" demanded monsieur briefly.

"Two runaway aristos—a man and a maid—last seen near Breteuil. They outwitted a couple of *gens d'armes* and ——"

"Tut, friend, your news is stale," interrupted monsieur. "You come from Brouillon himself?"

The rider stared.

"Stale? Why, I have ridden since dawn! And how did you guess that Brouillon was behind them?"

Monsieur laughed in tantalizing confidence.

"Because I am here on the same errand, and I have not tarried by the way any more than you."

The man seemed impressed but still not wholly satisfied.

"But the trail was so straight, and a man back there at the ferry showed me the scars and welts that the she-devil had dealt him in passing. He said no one else had passed since."

"He meant no one who could be of use, for he either forgot or neglected to mention the friar who paid him with a lot of gold for his crossing. It is against the law, you know, to help a church brother on his way in these times, and the ferryman hardly cared to mention his passenger. I saw something of the blows on his face myself."

The man frowned, in something akin to surly disappointment. He knew that he had been apparently the first messenger sent, and he knew that he had not lingered on his journey. It is never easy to persuade one who has put blood and muscle and mind into a project that another can do better or quicker work.

"But Brouillon had just reached Breteuil and I scarce waited to hear the particulars before I was off. A troop of *gens d'armes*, returning from an unsuccessful search, had heard Brouillon and two others howling and tied in a hovel. When I saw Brouillon he was half crazed with pain in his wounded head where a mad woman had cracked him, they said, and he was raving in fear that the suspects would escape before they were overtaken. He alternately cursed at the fugitives and at the pain in his head and in his hands and feet, swollen from the tight bands. If they are not soon brought back he will lose his reason, they say, and that would be a calamity indeed, the great Brouillon."

"A calamity truly irreparable," agreed monsieur. "Therefore it is for us to save the country. Indeed, I may tell you that I should be grieved more than I can tell or than you can perhaps understand, if I thought that I could never meet Brouillon again. There is—a very great deal—that I have to say to him," and monsieur's lips set in a straight, tight line.

"Regarding these same aristos?" inquired the rider.

"Exactly. Things that have escaped him thus far, but which I should take great joy in telling him—when the right moment is at hand, for even the great Brouillon can learn some things from others."

"Strange that he did not mention that he had despatched you," again commented the newcomer, evidently turning the question over and over in his mind. "He appeared to believe that everything depended upon me and my haste. And I have ridden like the devil—for naught!"

Both voice and face implied resentment and monsieur was not one to lose an open opportunity.

"My friend, consider a moment. The two are not yet taken, and who are we, you and I, to question the methods employed by those above us? When I received the note he had sent by the *gen d'arm*, I lost no time in following its commands and I asked no questions. Doubtless Brouillon feared that it might not reach my hands; perhaps after it had been sent he forgot the sending of it, with all that pain in his head. Anyway he knew, as all great leaders know, that it does not pay to send one agent only if two or more can be had; also that it is not profitable to inform one agent that another is before him, lest the second lag upon the way. Of course, far be it from me to suggest that Brouillon lacked confidence in you, friend."

The man's eyes snapped. "By the foul fiend, I do not care for his methods, if he cannot trust an honest man who does his best," he cried.

"Tut, tut, friend, have a care for your head," recommended monsieur, "for heads have fallen for much less than a criticism of one so high in authority as Brouillon, or so deep in the secrets of the Invulnerable as he. Yet let me tell you for guidance in future: trust not wholly to Brouillon nor to any other save yourself in these latter days. Things are moving and turning and the ones that were on top yesterday may be underneath to-morrow. Even the great agitator Hebert, you know, was overzealous and where are he and his Hebertists now? Indeed, it's an open secret in Paris that Robespierre and Danton are closing in a mortal conflict. If Robespierre goes under, where will Brouillon be? The leader of the old Cordilliers will hardly consider the secret tool of a fallen enemy as a man to be spared, once he is in

power." Monsieur looked from one to the other of his hearers and saw that the iron of his reasoning had entered both. There was unmistakable alarm in both faces and Pinoche carried signs of an imminent panic. Monsieur turned to him.

"This is but the first breath of a storm compared to which the things we have experienced are as summer lightning to a cyclone. Perhaps I do wrong to warn you in advance, yet how could I withhold a hint to good patriots? Not a word of this, of course, to any other. It is a serious business and if Brouillon should not fall, and should learn of the smallest disaffection here, he will be down upon the district in a whirlwind of destruction. You know his way. Therefore, whatever we may do must be carried through without a flaw."

"In the matter of these fleeing suspects?" inquired the rider.

"Yes, for neither you nor I would care to raise an alarm that would warn them and send them faster on their way. We must work together."

"But how?" cried the others in a breath.

Monsieur, thinking fast and hard, looked about him, fighting for time to plan, to think. Suddenly, what seemed at the moment an inspiration came to him. He glanced up and down the road, apparently to detect any approaching wayfarer, actually to turn the plan swiftly over in his mind to detect a possible flaw. A false move now would bring instant disaster. When his eyes at length came back to his companions, he found both faces puckered with curiosity.

"I wonder—are you sufficiently strong to devour strong food?" he apparently pondered aloud.

"Test me," cried the rider quickly, and Pinoche mumbled something about a true son of the Republic.

"Then, here is a little of my plan, but you must be content to accept what I can tell you and wait for more until the time comes when I can open it all. It is agreed?"

"Yes, oh, yes," they hurried him, with faces thrust forward and eyes that watched his lips devouringly.

"Then: I propose to pit Danton against Robespierre and to use these suspects as a lever to work the plans. If the pair are friends to Danton, as have reason to know that they are, then we can deliver them into his hands when taken, making first a bargain that will give us three both renown as good Republicans and riches that will make the remainder of life a pleasant holiday for each. If, on the other hand—you follow me?"

"Yes—yes!"

"Then, if on the other hand, Danton goes down before the great Robespierre, then we can deliver these two into the hands of Brouillon, and again, you perceive, the path is clear to the fame and the holiday. It is but catching the two and holding them over for a few days until we learn which way to jump. Any undue haste will spoil everything and when they are taken we must hide them, not letting others know, and await developments. What do you say?"

"Glorious," cried the rider, and struck his knee a sounding blow, so keen was his delight.

"Superb, superb!" echoed Pinoche. "Ah, the citizen-advocate is equal to the great Brouillon himself."

"Perhaps I have learned something in serving one so shrewd," explained monsieur, and he smiled.

"But meantime the suspects are still at large," remarked the stranger practically, "and the first move must be to get them into our hands."

"Truly, most astute," agreed monsieur admiringly. "But I must ask you to let me control that part of the plan, for it will work to advantage with others that I have. We have proved thus far, both you and I—by the way, friend, may I have your name, that there shall befall no mistake? Ah, Pierre Banque? Good. My own is Ramouillez, and this is Pinoche, who dwells a step down the first side road. So. Now we are ready, and as I was saying, we have proved that the two have not yet reached Faree and therefore they must be hiding somewhere south of this. Therefore, also, you will ride back a mile or more—Pinoche will show you the way and a place where you can get both food and rest, although it must be open-eyed rest, since no one must pass for a day or even two, either the suspects or any others, for if Brouillon doubts either you or me he will send another messenger, who must not get past you to obtain the glory of the capture. Neither must he interfere with our plans. It is vital that all who come from the south must be detained (doubtless they will wear disguise or give urgent excuse) and you must be deaf to any plea. Are you strong enough for this task, friend? It needs something of a genius, and one who can remember that our three heads hang on his efficiency."

"Never fear. I could fail in such a task no more than I could forget the reward. But when I have bagged the pair of suspects, what next?"

"Bring them at once to the Red Cap, a few metres further down this road. Ask for Pieter, a noble patriot

as Pinoche here knows, and he will hold them fast if I am not on hand to take charge of them myself, for you see there are other interests, as I mentioned," with a glance of reminder at Pinoche, "that may take me from the inn occasionally."

"And where do I come in?" demanded Pinoche.

"I am coming to that directly. You remember we arranged that for to-day you have a duty to your family," significantly, "that will keep you at home? Well, we can still combine the two duties, for the suspects may come easily by the road that passes your door, since they will naturally take a roundabout road either through Faree or on its farther side, for Amiens is too well-known a path to the north. Therefore, after you have seen our friend Banque here in a place among friends of your own, you will return to your house at once where you will of course consider it wiser to remain," with another glance that had its desired effect upon Pinoche. "Keep a sharp lookout and let none pass, although of course you must not excite question of any kind that will lead others to steal from us our glory. Even one's wife cannot always be trusted with one's private concerns, you know—not that she would prattle; but when a secret is locked fast in a man's own breast he holds property that no one can get unless he feels inclined to give it. There is a certain satisfaction in feeling one's self one's own master."

"Yes, yes," Pinoche hastened to agree with him, and monsieur felt that he had struck the right note.

"And my part?" said monsieur, answering the question in both the faces before him. "I will make frequent trips into Amiens and will be sure to hear of any travelers

from the south. You see the arrangements are perfect; they cannot escape. And now, *au revoir*, until we meet with our captives at the Red Cap. Whoever finds them first, let him send word to the others at once, and there is no use in suggesting again the necessity for secrecy, since everything depends upon it—including our own three heads."

With a nod, monsieur turned and started briskly in the direction of the Red Cap, as the others departed southward.

Yet after he had made sure that his co-conspirators were surely under way, monsieur's steps slackened and his progress became more and more slow, as he watched the two, with many backward glances. Scarcely had they mounted the hill and passed beyond it when monsieur turned and ran apparently after them at a speed that threatened to overtake them in a few moments if they had not continued on their way at a smart pace. But at the place where the church lane met the highroad monsieur suddenly stopped and searched the road with eyes that seemed to see infinitesimal objects. Nothing moved. The next instant he was on his knees searching the bushes feverishly for the food Pieter had promised.

Minutes passed while he was so engaged, minutes that seemed hours to the searcher, so sorely did time press. At any moment some one might find him there, and then new lies, new excuses to be invented; lies and excuses that perhaps might not so well succeed.

Ah, at last! He came upon the sylvan cupboard unexpectedly when he had almost abandoned hope. It proved to be a rough box of wood painted brown and green, so clever a copy of the ground about it that he had doubtless passed it several times in his hasty search.

Now, lifting the cover, he found a loaf and some milk, and a couple of little tarts, as if Rosalie had added a gift of her own as an afterthought.

With these in his hands monsieur ran through the woods on light feet, fearing a thousand possibilities that he scarcely framed for himself and yet which he suffered in detail in advance.

Reaching the place at length where he had left mademoiselle, he experienced a certain dizziness, so great was the relief and the reaction to find all his fears groundless and his charge fast asleep.

Although he tried to approach softly, and although he stifled as best he could his panting breath, one or the other, or perhaps just his very nearness, awoke her, and she opened her eyes with the alarm that returning consciousness inevitably brought. She lifted herself on her elbow; her startled eyes, still heavy with sleep, looking up at him; her lips, parted in that one stifled cry, brightly red with youth's unmatched painting; her loosened hair, dark and soft, falling in rings about her face,—each item of perfection graving itself instantly and for all time on the consciousness of the sole witness. Transfixed, expectant, defiant—so she remained for a single moment; then, with a long sigh of relief, she fell back upon her hard couch.

"Why am I always so foolishly a child?" she asked him, as if he were a magician who knew all secrets. "When I am alone I see only dreadful faces and eyes, and—and then monsieur comes and I know that I need fear nothing in all the world," and the heavy lids fell over eyes that were smiling in happy confidence, as her voice softly trailed into silence.

Monsieur, his hands filled with food for her, stood quite still, looking down upon the little smile and the lashes that lifted again just once, and then went back to their quiet restfulness on the oval cheek.

The man laid down his burden and turned somewhat away. Her words had given back to him a glimpse of another face that he had recently seen with its eyes closed in pain, the face on the pillow at the Red Cap. He recalled the beseeching eyes whose owner even now was counting every second that passed in tormenting fear that he should never see this woman again,—alternating with a very anguish of eager anticipation for the night to come that would bring her to his bedside.

For him—Victor—had been reserved the task of deciding, he to whom this man had entrusted her, counting him best among his friends, the one whom alone he could trust, not only to save her from others, but to save her for the sick man himself. In a flash the true aspect of the thing arose accusingly before monsieur. His flinching had been because he feared that if he did not present mademoiselle at the right moment, or the expected moment, Franz might accuse him of a lack of faith. Did he deserve such accusation? Had he not been true to his friend in all ways? But what right had he now either to satisfy Franz or to justify himself, to jeopardize this woman's life by a visit to the Red Cap where the very floors creaked with watchfulness and suspicion? And if he did not go——? What might not Franz attempt in his sick unreason? What was best? What was right?

Then, straightening, as if the attitude gave him courage, he kept his eyes held resolutely to the food he had laid down, and explained the necessity for his delay in

returning and the need now that she should eat before they went back to a place of safety that he had found.

But no, she was too sleepy to eat, and she turned her face away, pillowing her head on her arm in childish determination to return to the land of dreams.

Monsieur unflinchingly persisted. Any moment might bring prying eyes into her retreat, and one had been found who offered her comparative safety and shelter.

Then, with those red lips pouting rebellion, mademoiselle at last consented to sit up, rubbing her eyes sleepily.

"I wonder if we shall ever sleep happily and safely again, you and I, monsieur?" and she tried to speak lightly. "And have sleep enough, really enough? I am become a very gourmand for sleep, and eternity would seem too short if I could spend it all in laziness!" and she laughed faintly, rubbing her shoulder that ached from the hardness of her couch.

"While you breakfast I want to tell you what has happened," and monsieur rapidly sketched for her Rosalie and Pieter, Pinoche and Dalse, and finally the *curé* and Pierre Banque; but never a syllable did he utter regarding Franz or De Martignon.

She ate composedly while he talked, stopping occasionally to interrupt with a question; but it was evident that she considered monsieur fully able to grapple with any problem or exigency that might arise, and that she did not care either to suggest or to interfere. It was very much as if a princess had confidence in a trusted courier and could afford to leave everything in his hands.

"And so," she said, when his story was done and her simple meal had been finished, "and so we are to go

from here directly to monsieur the *curé* at the church and wait with him until night falls? Oh! why not stay here, monsieur? It is so lovely here under the big trees, with the blue sky almost close enough to touch if one were in the trees themselves; and the air so soft and clear and fresh. Houses hold spies, in every crack and corner. Oh, surely it must be safe here, for no one has come. By and by we shall have to live within walls again and do all the cold, formal, heartless things that men and women always do shut within those walls. If any one comes here, we can hide behind the trees if we hear their footsteps, and—and"—she hesitated, glancing at him almost shyly, before the lashes suddenly fell to shadow the soft pink that crept into her cheeks—"and then—then there would be just you and I, you see, and no stupid *curé* to ask a hundred questions, and—oh, don't you think it would be a great deal nicer here?"

Monsieur was obliged to admit that he found it extremely nice there, although he did not mention that it was altogether too nice for his comfort when it came to choosing between this and the necessary refuge of the church.

It was not in human nature to refuse a suggestion made when mademoiselle was in just that mood and offered in just that way; though he was careful to ease his conscience by explaining that by and by—in a little while at most—they must go to the *curé*, yet he did not push their departure, being quite as content as she with the trees and the sky and the sunshine, holding them, however, only as background for a slender figure in shabby clothes and a pair of eyes that looked wistfully into his own from time to time for something that

his heart was aching to give and dared not. Swiftly it came home to him again that the hardest thing the future might hold would be this question in her eyes that he had no right to answer, and that he might some day have to let her pass out of his life and his keeping, his mouth sealed with the honor that friendship demanded.

The thought brought a reminder of what he owed the sick man in the immediate present, and he at last plunged almost recklessly into speech of Franz, perhaps hoping to find in it a salve to an uneasy conscience.

A little pause had fallen between them,—a pause that mademoiselle had filled by picking to pieces some dried leaves that had surrounded her bed, and her eyes had been so busy with her task that she had not seen the resolution gathering in his. After another glance at her quiet face, monsieur took to gathering leaves himself and to destroying them in his hand, grinding them between his palms rather mercilessly. He found it much easier when so occupied to hold his eyes from the hands across the way and to talk of his friend.

"I did not tell you, I think, that at the inn I saw two others."

"Yes?" but she was not sufficiently interested to lift her eyes.

"Others that I did not mention."

She glanced up now instantly, for although his voice was non-committal, it held a certain reluctance that awoke in her a vague uneasiness.

"Others? Many?" she repeated.

"Just two."

"One was not Brouillon?"

"No." He crumpled more leaves, a big handful this time. "No. They were friends."

She frowned, impatient of his terseness. "Why are you so mysterious? You seem almost as if you hesitated to name them."

Monsieur's hand tightened for a single second on the leaves.

"One was the Count de Martignon. He claimed to have known you quite well."

"Santon?" with a little laugh of relief. "Why, of course. He used to come often to our house with Franz, and my father used to say that he always seemed to steady Franz in any of his enthusiasms; he was considerably older, you know. But I heard that he was an *émigré*?"

"I do not know. He was in Paris that last day of March, and now he is here."

"How strange." Mademoiselle was thoughtful. "Did he say how he chanced to be here just now?"

Monsieur tossed his crushed handful away and watched the light breeze shower it broadcast. "He did not need to say. I saw. He was helping an invalid across to the coast. I saw the invalid."

The words came in jerks, like little wrenches, and mademoiselle leaned suddenly forward, her red lips parted in eager waiting for the name. When it failed to follow the last sentence she spoke it herself, softly, as if almost she feared such happiness could not be true.

"Not—Franz?"

Monsieur nodded. "Yes, Franz," he said, and for the length of a breath his eyes met hers and then looked past her. He felt wooden, stony, only half human. He knew

that he must seem to her a strange creature that was not openly joyous at meeting again a friend whom he had thought dead. He shook himself savagely. Never in all his life had he felt like this.

"Oh, I am so glad, so glad!" she cried. "He was not killed then that awful day! Take me to him—now! I want to thank him on my knees for what he did for me!"

She was on her feet in an instant, all eagerness to be gone.

"But that is just the problem, mademoiselle," he explained. "That is why I hesitated so long to speak his name. I knew you would want to—to tell him what you felt, but it means so much danger—unnecessary danger, and—heavens, I cannot reason clearly any more! This is one of the things that mademoiselle must decide for herself, after she hears both sides."

"No, no, we will go at once," she cried. Then, after a glance at her clothes, she looked up in distress. "Just look at me! Did you ever see such a fright? And my hair is all tumbled and tangled!"

She tossed the loose strands from her face, inviting him with a look to help her.

"Oh, I should bungle it dreadfully if I tried," he offered helplessly, in answer to that look.

"Well, at least you can find the few pins that are left of those that Susanne put in," and she turned her back, awaiting his service.

His heart was in his throat! What if he should hurt her? He had never had a sister and he knew very little of a woman's ways. His fingers shook as they touched the dusky softness. How fine and soft it was! just fashioned to enmesh a man's heart.

"Do hurry," she urged him pitilessly.

At length he had found the last pin and the dark mass rippled in its fall below her waist. Monsieur was quite breathless as he looked upon such riches.

"Now braid it—well, begin to braid it somehow, and when the braid is long enough toss it over my shoulder and I can finish it, for I've seen Marie do it so often, but my fingers are just wooden things when I try."

At length between them it was accomplished, and, gathered loosely above the small ears, was held at the nape of the neck in that single rope of braided blackness. Monsieur decided that this particular mode of coiffure was more beautiful than anything he had ever seen, and at once he determined that in the days to come, those days in England, perhaps, or better still the days when they had returned to a pacified and happy France, he would ask her to wear it thus for him always. Then he suddenly remembered that now there would be no days to come for him, that is, no days that would mean anything. He came back to an abrupt consciousness of the present as he heard her say :

"Now, take me to Franz. I cannot wait to tell him how my heart is bursting with its happiness. He is alive. I could not bear to feel that he had—had died for me."

But monsieur explained that they could not return to the Red Cap until nightfall, and until Rosalie had arranged to secrete them. "I'll take you instead to the good *curé* who will keep you safe until I can see Rosalie and Pieter," he offered.

Her face fell. "But Franz knows that I am near him

and he wants me. He did not wait to count the chances for his own escape when I was in danger."

"Yes, but the cases are hardly alike. He is in no present danger, and I told him that you could not possibly reach him before night. You might endanger his life if you went to him openly, you see."

"What did he say when he saw you? Did he send me no message?"

They were walking through the woods now, following no path, but making for the church in as straight a line as possible.

"He sent you an earnest plea to come to him."

"But you did not say so!" she cried accusingly.

"I purposely withheld it," returned monsieur quietly, but his head was turned and she could not see his face.

"Why?"

"It might have persuaded you against your better judgment. I felt that it was not fair to offer anything that might influence you in any way. You understand, of course, that you will go to him to-night at great personal risk?"

"Did he consider that question for himself when he saved me?" she demanded swiftly, as if the imputation were intolerable.

"No."

"And you think that my courage and my—well," defiantly,—“my love are less than his?” she cried hotly.

"No," said monsieur again in that wooden voice.

She caught up to him now as he pushed ahead and, leaning forward a little, she looked up into his face, studying curiously an attitude so laconic. What was the matter? Why did he seem so frozen and strange?

her look asked him. Then, after a moment, she drew back and let him lead the way once more.

"I shall go to Franz as soon as it is dusk," she said.

"I knew that perfectly from the beginning," returned monsieur, and they went on in silence.

CHAPTER XII

A LIGHT THAT WAS STEADY

THE day proved long for mademoiselle, longer even than she had feared, though the good *curé* gave his very best for entertainment. Monsieur had departed almost as soon as he had seen her safe in the *curé's* care and had stopped only to inspect somewhat hastily the little room beneath the altar, now brightly lighted with a couple of candles hung in glass bottles fastened to the wall, so small were its dimensions. He had much to arrange; first with Rosalie for mademoiselle's interview with Franz, and then with Pieter as to how best to depart unseen after that meeting was over.

Mademoiselle had understood perfectly the necessity for his absence, yet his going had left behind a curio homesickness that she endeavored in vain to elude. was wholly useless to remind herself that until a few days ago she had lived her life happily enough without this man: even while she argued, her heart was hurrying after him and counting the minutes before she could possibly look for his return.

It was after dark when he came at last, and at sound of his footstep and knock she fairly ran to unlock the little postern door.

"Is everything ready?" she cried eagerly. "May we start at once?"

He waited to lock the door before he answered, and

in the dark she considered how strong and steady he always seemed, how straight he was now as he stood beside her, how confidently he carried every undertaking that fell to his hands.

"Yes, I think almost everything is done. Rosalie will take you to her room as a friend of her own and she has fresh clothing, though it is but the rough homespun that the Picardy peasant girl wears."

"Yes, yes; go on," mademoiselle hurried him.

"She will take you to De Beaurepeau and I will wait outside the Red Cap. We have agreed, Rosalie and Pieter and I, that you must not remain more than a moment, and that I might detain you if I saw Franz at the same time." He looked away somewhat evasively she thought. "You see, every extra person makes an inevitable delay, and we have many miles to make before dawn."

She looked up at him as if he had not wholly finished, but when he stopped with definite intent, she put her question quietly:

"Does Franz know?"

"I have not seen him since this morning, but I am sure he expects you. He asked me then to leave the matter with you, so confident did he feel as to your decision."

Yet she felt a baffling sense of something withheld.

"But will he not think it strange that you do not see him?" she persisted.

He looked his surprise. "What could he want to say to me that he has not already said? No, my presence would do no good, and might do much harm if we were seen leaving the house together. As Rosalie's friend,

you are free to come and go, but if any one saw any man and maid, unknown to these parts, going away together they might naturally connect the two with the suspects that have escaped from Paris."

"Perhaps," she agreed doubtfully; but she seemed still a little dissatisfied. She half turned to lead the way indoors, then stopped again, for he had not moved and she saw that he was standing frowning into the dark in an absorption so absolute as to be wholly unaware that she had moved. After watching him a moment she went back and laid her hand on his arm.

"You fear to tell me that something has happened?" she inquired, but in so quiet a voice that it penetrated his consciousness slowly.

Aware at length that she was there, and that she had spoken, he turned and met her eyes, as if awakening.

"Eh——? No, no. How stupid I am. I fairly fall asleep standing. This time I was planning some way to kidnap the *curé*. He will not leave voluntarily and Rosalie tells me that his presence here is of course a menace to them all. Any moment he may be seized, for in the eyes of these poor ignorant peasants the priests are almost as great traitors as are the aristos who persist in living in spite of all charitable intentions to the contrary." He smiled rather wearily. "Yet you see the *curé* believes that his place is here, and no persuasion has been able to move him." He looked at her fully then, and she read his thought before he had uttered it. "How can we go without lifting a hand to save him?" he said.

"But he will listen—he must," cried mademoiselle. "Oh, I am sure it can be made most simple," and she led the way toward the inner door.

A single candle in the church flared as the door opened, and lighted the face of the *curé*, who, carrying it, had started to meet them. The great, bare walls behind him, receding into shadow, gave a background of desolation against which the white-haired figure in its flowing dress, with valiantly sweet smile, seemed a sculptured thing.

"Ah, my son, come at last," said the *curé*, as the two entered. "The countess has been trying to hide her impatience for thy coming all day," and he laughed softly, delighted at his own astuteness. "Now she will go gladly, I see, though she will leave an empty place behind. I will remember this day long. It has been so good to talk with thee, my dear," turning again to mademoiselle with that air of childish pleasure.

She had grown uncomfortably scarlet under the first words, but now she flung aside all thought of herself and spoke persuasively.

"But perhaps the talking is not over," she began, "for, father, we have come to ask you to help us still more."

"What can I do?" He seemed a trifle surprised, but his hospitality answered instantly the call. "Ah, you are not going to-night? Of course my home is yours as long as you will stay, and a blanket in the church outside will be everything that I could possibly need," he added, as if he longed to spend a night in just that way.

"No, it is not that. We are going on to-night, but we want you to guide us beyond Doullen, for we might lose our way in the dark."

The *curé* looked deliberately from one to the other, and the ghost of a smile touched his lips. "You who have come unguided all the way from Paris now need a

guide for a few short miles? My daughter, your heart is ruling your tongue unwisely, in your care for me."

"Oh, father, father, be wise now—for the sake of these children of yours, madame and Rosalie and Pieter," mademoiselle cried. "Think of what your staying may mean to them, for if you are taken they will go down too, little Rosalie and the great Pieter that you have told me about to-day. Those dreadful ones who find you will know that some one has aided you and then—oh, if you will not save your own life, surely you will not jeopardize theirs? Come with us until the tempest is over. Then you shall come back to your little flock that will need you so much."

She spoke with an earnestness that could not fail to carry conviction and the *curé*, taking his eyes from hers, let them wander slowly from wall to wall, from broken floor to ruined ceiling, lingering in their task as if the very shadows held dear and familiar things that were no less real because they were only memories.

"You are quite right—I cannot stay," he said quietly at last. "The place is empty—empty—and the poor children will not come here for the comfort that the church can give. They must suffer and struggle and die before the lesson is learned, the poor little ones! Ah, my heart bleeds for them; so blind, so blind! But it is wrong to sacrifice the lives of these other loyal ones, just because I cannot tear from me the hope that some day they will all come home once more. Yes, I will go where I can serve the dear Mother Church in a better way than by standing idle here waiting for the impossible," and he lifted his head as if at that moment he were quite ready to begin life in a new place all over again.

But no amount of persuasion could induce him to travel with these two in the flight northward. He could no more endanger their lives, he explained, than those of these other children whom he was leaving. He would go alone, wherever he went, and he would meet them by and by in the place monsieur designated, if he did not find first some place where he could serve; but no, no, they must not try to persuade him otherwise. Seeing that he was unhappy under their persuasion, however well meant, they desisted at last, understanding that in his quiet way he was like a diamond; so exquisitely clear and white-souled, so impossible to adapt except by cutting literally to pieces.

At last they were forced to leave him, standing in the arch of the postern gate, his face betraying only concern for them. But he had promised to leave during the night and that was something gained.

Monsieur had brought a horse for mademoiselle, but he walked beside her, explaining that as a friend of Rosalie's, she would be to eyes and ears at the Red Cap one riding in to return a horse borrowed some days before, and who had been detained until after dark by work at home. From Rosalie's room she would find it easy to slip into that of Franz, and after just that moment spent with him, she would find monsieur waiting in the darkness of the thickest hedge, before one came to the stable.

Mademoiselle, listening, acquiesced with a nod from time to time, and occasionally a question; but when they were almost come to the inn both fell silent.

To both this approaching moment with Franz was brimming with possibilities.

Once, looking down upon the man who walked so

quietly at her stirrup, mademoiselle opened her lips as if something trembled there, that strove for utterance; but she turned her head quickly away after that glance, and a sigh escaped instead. Since breakfast in the woods that morning monsieur had seemed such a very distant and cold monsieur, and the change, inexplicable as it was, contracted her heart.

It was this same faint sigh, however, that brought words from him at last, for any evidence of distress in her aroused instant endeavor in him to overcome it.

"You are tired?" he asked looking up into her face, and drawing somewhat closer to the horse as they moved forward.

"No, I've rested all day," mademoiselle reminded him, suddenly warmed into a fleeting smile by the solicitude in his voice. It was deliciously agreeable to be cared for in just this way, and—and—thought about.

"But you seemed so—I hardly know how to put it. You are not discouraged, with so much of the journey done and safety now to be had just for the taking?"

No, it was not discouragement. Mademoiselle made it evident that she felt only confidence in the future.

He was very near now, for her words had been quietly spoken, so near indeed that his voice had fallen and his arm lay across the back of the saddle. A gable light from the Red Cap twinkled through the crossed branches of the old tree, and the horse, that had been moving more and more slowly for some minutes, now stopped altogether, though neither rider nor foot-passenger was aware of his halting.

"What was it then? Tell me," murmured monsieur.

Mademoiselle shook her head. Words had suddenly flown beyond call.

"Tell me," persisted monsieur, with that thrill in his lowered voice.

He could not possibly understand a woman's mere whim, she managed to convey at last, in a voice as soft as his own.

"You think that I am a stone that I cannot feel what you are suffering, either in the smallest degree or to the uttermost of pain?" and the eyes that she could not see, but felt, compelled an answer. She turned a fraction of an inch toward him.

"Monsieur's heart is not stone then? By this morning and again to-night monsieur has seemed so—so very like a stone in his silence and his frowning brows. Who could be gay with a companion that is like a frozen mountain?"

"Ah, now you speak of your own south where the big mountains stand, impassive and quiet, hiding the fires that perhaps are raging at their hearts. Can you understand," he asked, "that those mountains may be very like men after all, men who must remain always dumb—dumb!—and hide something that burns like fire?"

Mademoiselle flashed around upon him now, no trace of the countess in the face that quivered with something very like anticipation. Girlhood in its essence, in its divinity, was there, calling to him for its right to hear his story, hinting, all unconscious of its splendor, something of the reward that speech might bring.

"Ah, you have seen my hills! Then you know that even those big, dear, silent mountains open their hearts when spring comes and speak in a riot of happy green-

ness," she whispered. "Whatever burns in their hearts can be only happiness and joy!"

Monsieur's grip on the saddle tightened suddenly. Face, voice, eyes were calling him, calling him, telling in a thousand caressing ways that this was the one crucial moment of a man's life, when a strong leap might bridge the chasm that lay between this woman's heart and his own, between this rising womanhood in her and the manhood clamoring in his breast for its man's right to be heard.

For a long, long breath monsieur looked into that sparkling face with its parted lips and the eyes that engulfed every sense in their brightness. Then, with teeth set hard, he looked away to where the light from the gable window twinkled through the trees. Ah——! Why could she not understand what the struggle meant to him? How could she so cruelly test him? Even her mountains could speak to her and yet he, who was tingling to his farthest nerves with eagerness to speak just three little words, must remain to her as cold as the great fields of ice on the frozen summits of those spring-clad hills.

Then that first rocking moment of storm began to lift and monsieur became slowly, dimly aware of the little light twinkling through the network of branches. Looking at it fixedly, still savagely rebellious, he felt that light rather than saw it, felt its steadiness and the influence of roof-tree and shelter that it suggested. He drew a long, rasping breath. The persistence of that light steadied him. Franz was behind that light, waiting, waiting. Again that gasping breath, but now it was the gasp of a swimmer who has won a hard race and who touches land

with a sickening sense that winning carries an overwhelming price.

He did not dare to turn and look at her; he could not trust his voice to entreat her patience; he had no promise of future frankness that he could make; he could not so much as suggest that any contingency might unlock his heart and his lips, lest in holding out for himself such a possibility his heart would overflow the dam his will had erected and rush in a flood through his lips. When he forced speech at last his voice was like a flint.

"Mademoiselle must let her great hills speak for me. Such spring as theirs may never come for me—I do not know. Now, it is all winter—winter." He caught his slipping emotion back with a hard hand. "I know this is a thing that must be hard for you to understand, but I——" Ah! Just at the very crest of the dam that time, but the check came before it was too late, and he finished in a rush: "You cannot possibly understand, and I cannot explain." He straightened and caught the bridle. "We must make haste, for Franz is waiting."

Instinctively, groping for light, she recognized that her woman's fortitude must in some way inspire this man's courage. Then, deliberately, she in turn drew herself away from that rushing torrent of happiness and with a pitiful little breath, of which she was unaware but which wrenched his heart sharply, she answered the spur of the moment's obligation with the instant response of nobility.

"Yes, as you say, while we talk of mountains Franz is waiting. It will be very good to see him again for I have so much to thank him for—most of all for giving me a defender as strong as you. Must I cross the yard here all alone? That is not strong at all, is it?" She

tried to laugh. "You are quite sure that Pieter will be ready? But first, please give me a hand down."

Monsieur answered her smile with one as brave as itself, and his arms went around her and lifted her to her feet. But a man, even a strong man, is not iron and he is strong only to a certain point. For a single second this man felt that he had reached the utmost frontier of endurance and for that second his arms held fast, and she clung to him as one grips a refuge in the dark. Then very gently she attempted to draw away and his arms fell. She left him without so much as a look, but after she had taken several steps, she turned impulsively and came back.

"Women do not reason, monsieur, they only feel, and they have a God-given patience that men are denied. And—I am a woman, and nothing can take from me these two—not silence, nor absence, nor even long years."

"Ah!" He caught her hand and held it to his lips. "I thank you for that—as I thank God for these days He has given me with you," he said. Then he let her go alone across the inn-yard, the bridle of her horse over her arm. Moving after a moment to watch her better, he saw her silhouetted against the bright square of the opened stable door and then she was gone.

CHAPTER XIII

"I WILL NOT FORGET"

THE minutes dragged and dragged and dragged. How many they were—thousands, they seemed to monsieur—ever increasing, and still she did not come. He dared not leave his place to go in search of her lest she come by another way in his absence, yet the pressure of his anxiety was becoming momentarily more unbearable. Had Dalfe seen her and taken her? Or was some other holding her imprisoned there until, in his inevitable impatience, he should go in search of her and be taken? While he was free he could still serve her, monsieur remembered; but to be taken meant failure to save her.

Still new moments were born, grew to old age, and died, and still mademoiselle did not come.

Several men, laughing and calling to one another, opened the main door of the inn and, after standing on the steps a moment, came down the path. They paused again at the gate, and then, separating, two turned and came close to where monsieur stood. He shrank back into the friendly cover of the bushes and they passed without seeing him. He recognized one as a man he had talked with earlier that evening and to whom he had given an excuse of going to his room for some necessary writing—if the man had detected him here, lurking in the shadow, what suspicion might not have arisen?

But now a man came around the rear end of the Red Cap and made straight for the place that concealed mon-

sieur. When within ten yards of the spot he stopped and spoke softly.

"Victor?" he said, testingly, it seemed.

It was De Martignon, and monsieur left the bushes promptly and was in the road.

"What has happened?" he cried in that tense, strained undertone.

"Franz wants a word with you before you leave."

Were all in the world turning traitors? Had Rosalie and Pieter abandoned mademoiselle and sent his friend to lure him into the hands of the patriots? Had his experience taught him only suspicion? Yet he answered firmly.

"Impossible," he said.

"Franz insists," repeated De Martignon.

"But time is so precious, and the horses have been waiting for us for more than an hour, hidden from prying eyes. Every second makes their detection more certain."

"I know, and both mademoiselle and I have urged reason, but you know Franz, and when his heart is set on one thing, how impossible it is to change it," and De Martignon looked anxious and somewhat worn.

"What has he to say to me?" parried monsieur.

"I do not know, but he insists that he cannot let mademoiselle go until he has had a word with you. I believe it is simply a sick man's fancy, but he will listen to nothing else."

"Mademoiselle reached him safely then?"

"Yes. Rosalie managed cleverly. That girl is a wonderful statesman; so acute, so alert, so wholly other than what she seems. When she came with mademoiselle,

Franz lost his head with joy. Rosalie told me that she could not remain longer as her absence from the ordinary for long would inevitably raise a question and if you will come with me at once you may be able to leave the sooner."

The common sense of such reasoning was convincing. Monsieur agreed with a nod.

" I will go through the ordinary, for some may have seen me leave earlier and in these times one cannot neglect any trick. I will linger there only long enough to make any evidence of haste impossible and then I will go at once to Franz. Warn him, however, that I will stay with him not above a single moment."

De Martignon promised, and they separated, monsieur making straight for the main doorway.

The room held a number of men as he entered, among whom he saw Dalfe in earnest converse with another at a side table. Both looked up quickly at his entrance and monsieur saw Dalfe nudge his companion. Monsieur stopped for a laughing word with Rosalie, who stood behind the bar, arms akimbo, head tilted on one side, challenging the admiration and the gallantry of the entire roomful.

" Ah, here is the surly one who has been gone so long," she cried to monsieur. " If the citizen-advocate expects to get his writing done to-night he should certainly make haste," she continued with a saucy interest in his affairs.

Monsieur accepted it as an advice for haste in departing and nodded comprehendingly.

" Has my friend come yet ? " he inquired in turn.

" No," and Rosalie swept the room indifferently with

her eyes. "Very few travel by night near Faree Village, and we keep good hours at the Red Cap. Do not burn the candle too long, for madame will not tolerate a light late in her windows, even if the citizen pays for the candles himself."

"I will therefore be a good boy and make haste," monsieur assured her and passed down the room. Dalfe looked up with narrowed eyes as he reached him, but monsieur nodded and Dalfe made no other evidence of interest.

At his own door monsieur paused sufficiently long to make sure that no one followed, and that none lurked in the shadows, then, with an instant's turn, he had crossed the hall and was in the other room.

De Martignon had evidently just entered, for he stood near the door and monsieur heard his voice explaining the arrangement lately made with himself. Beside the bed in the corner mademoiselle was on her knees, her hand clasped in both of those of the invalid. She did not turn as monsieur entered, yet she must have been aware of it, for though he came in so quietly, De Martignon said with relief: "Ah, he is here!"

Franz looked toward him and uttered a little cry of triumph. He had changed considerably since the morning, for the joy of mademoiselle's near presence had banished from his mind all lesser things, even all sense of anxiety as to the possible result of his insistence upon this interview, and of having so long detained her in dangerous territory.

"Ah, Victor, see, see!" he cried. "All the pain of the past hours is satisfied now," and he lifted mademoiselle's hand with a smile of possession.

"You had something to tell me?" inquired monsieur a hint frigidly, as if he were trying to fasten him down to the practical details of the present.

"Yes. I want to arrange with you some way for receiving news of your success in getting through to the coast. De Martignon and the physician both tell me that I cannot leave here for some days, and in the meantime I am sure I shall die of the suspense if I am not assured of mademoiselle's safety from time to time as she goes from one resting-place to another."

Monsieur's voice was impatient and not agreeable as he returned:

"You have survived your anxiety thus far and the worst of the danger is over. You may as well make up your mind to summon further courage, for I shall certainly leave no lines dangling behind us to point the way to any who may follow."

"You surely do not mean that you refuse?" cried Franz, incredibly.

"I certainly refuse—absolutely. I cannot comprehend how you could require such a thing; you, a soldier."

"But a courier despatched with just a word, such as 'Doullen,' or 'St. Omer,' or anything that will not tell others, but which I will understand, will mean so much to me," persisted the invalid.

"And the courier who carried such a message would be able to describe most minutely the ones who sent him, and any one on the road whose business it might be to follow the fugitives would be most entertained with his story," returned monsieur warmly. "No, you must trust me to the end now. Neither you nor I have choice as to what we may want or the right to juggle with safety."

Franz relinquished the plan with a sigh. "Perhaps you are right," he agreed. "I would not lay a hair in Celeste's path to endanger her. Surely," turning to her, "she knows that?"

"Yes, yes, surely," returned mademoiselle soothingly.

"And when I am able to travel I will meet you in England," pursued Franz, as if no smallest detail of the plan could be carried forward unless it were rehearsed now. "You still think it best to go straight to your own chateau until you are able to cross?"

Mademoiselle moved a trifle hastily, but she did not turn or look toward monsieur.

"I have found no reason to change our first plan," assented monsieur. "We can stay there until we can secure a vessel of some sort and then it will be only a step to Calais—and England."

"You have faith in your people?" persisted Franz.

"Why not?"

"But other dukes have been betrayed and most often by those who knew them best, their trusted servants. These times are not those of yesterday, when men did not know their wrongs or how to right them," warned Franz.

"Yet through all we have trusted our people and they have not failed us yet," maintained the other quietly. "I believe that there is no place in the world so safe for me as under my own roof and among my own people."

"For you, perhaps; but what of mademoiselle? She is the real issue. Would your safety among them mean hers? Is it safe to let her stay in the keeping of a lot of peasants who have never seen her, if they learn that Paris demands her return? You must remember, Victor,

that even in their loyalty to you they have a higher loyalty to their country and that orders from Paris bring grave consequences."

For a brief flash monsieur's eyes were on fire.

"I do not understand these questions and this recounting of the odds against us," he said. "What profit do they bring? They only open new torments for you and accomplish literally nothing else. Control your fears, Franz, and let us go at once. In that way you can serve mademoiselle best and hasten the time when we shall all meet up there in the north or in England. If we have left the chateau before you are well enough to reach it I will have arranged some way for you to follow us. Above all, trust me. I think that I have earned the right to that, and every moment that you detain mademoiselle here increases her danger. I do not need to remind you that while we waste time here the others may be gaining. I beg you, Franz, release mademoiselle at once."

The countess rose, but she did not take her eyes from the bed. De Beaurepeau, finding that the parting could be no longer delayed, carried her hand again and again to his lips.

"You have brought me both happiness and life again," he told her. "And some day—before long now, you may be sure—I will come for you, for I will grow well fast, now that I have had you here. And we will go to a new life in England, Celeste, where there is rest and no bitterness and bloodshed. Tell me once again before you go that I still have your love."

"You know that I love you and that I thank you with all my heart," returned mademoiselle at once, soothingly.

"I know how much you have sacrificed for me, and how much you did for me that day in Paris. You would not be here, injured, if it were not for that day, and for me."

"Ah, that was less than nothing, Celeste, for I do not need to tell you that my only happiness lies in serving you. My only sorrow now is that I must entrust you to others. See, I am grown so selfish! And, oh, but I am envious of the Duke du——!"

"No, no," interrupted the countess quickly, and she laid her hand lightly across his lips. "I would rather have his name from himself, please, please, Franz! It is—a foolish fancy of mine."

Monsieur strode forward a single step, impulsively, as if he were spurred by some unseen motive, that could not avoid action. Yet when the words came they were quiet ones, and they sounded to those who heard very like a reprieve.

"Men call me Victor, the seventh Duke du Marsillac," he said.

She turned in a flash and held out her hand, while Franz still imprisoned the other.

"Was it wrong to force you before you were ready, perhaps? Was it wrong to want you to tell me yourself? I wanted so much to hear it from—you. Can you understand that whatever 'men may call you' I shall always like you best as just monsieur?"

"And did he hide his name from you all this time, Celeste?" interrupted Franz.

Monsieur turned almost savagely. "It was your own plan, your own insistence," he reminded Franz.

"Yes, now I recall it, but I had forgotten," assented De Beaurepeau. "I never allow sufficiently for your

iron will, or remember that you follow the letter of the law rather than its intent. You would have made a great soldier, Victor, for a man in the ranks is supposed to know only obedience and nothing more."

"I must remind you again that the suppression of my name was your own choice," repeated the duke a hint sharply.

De Beaurepeau turned to the countess. He began to chaff her gently, playfully, as if all the time in the world were at his disposal.

"But, Celeste, if you prefer 'monsieur' to 'duke,' you must be turning Republican yourself, and we will make a regular little patriot of you yet, when we have come to that promised land of ours," a hint wistfully.

The duke dropped the hand she had given him.

"It is easier now to avoid the Republicans that already exist than to make new recruits," he said. "De Martignon, we will see you with Franz at the chateau or in England in a few days at most?"

De Beaurepeau reluctantly released mademoiselle's hand. "Yes, yes, in a few days, only a few days, and I must be content with that—dearest." He added the last whisperingly before he turned his face and took the duke's hand a moment.

"Remember she is my soul, my very soul, Victor," he said.

"I will not forget," promised the duke in turn, and in another moment they were in the hall.

At the top of the back stairs Rosalie relieved De Martignon of the leadership, no hint in her grave young face of the lightness the duke had seen on it in the ordinary a few minutes before. This was a woman who

knew danger by heart and who had faced it often for others. She laid a warning finger on her lips and drew mademoiselle by the hand down those dark stairs into the stable yard. The breath of the night struck them keenly as they emerged into the yard, and after a brief pause in the shadow to be sure no enemy lurked there, the three crossed to the corner near the stable where Pieter waited.

Rosalie stopped mademoiselle's expressions of gratitude with a gesture, and after a nod to Pieter, to make sure that he understood the task before him, she flitted away and was swallowed in the shadow of the cabaret. Pieter, without so much as a look at his two companions, led them across a field of stubble to a copse where two horses were tied.

It was Pieter who lifted mademoiselle to the saddle, while the duke was busy with his own, but when he drew back with an old-time ceremony that seemed out of keeping in one so rough and taciturn, mademoiselle detained him.

"Rosalie has told me—and I am very glad for you both," she said meaningly, and instantly Pieter's face was like a torch, so bright was its happiness.

"Ah, I am blessed far beyond my worthiness," he answered quickly, and neither of the two seemed to find their speech enigmatical.

Monsieur offered the man his hand. "If you ever need a friend and I am living, come to me at Marsillac," he said, and Pieter took off his cap with a hasty remembrance of other days.

"I shall not forget, monsieur, but you have done more for us than we can measure in getting the good *curé*

away. He leaves to-night, and I have nearly everything ready. My heart will beat steadily again when I hear that he is safe somewhere, for he has been a father to every soul in Faree as long as any can remember."

"Why do you not go with him?" inquired monsieur suddenly, as if the possibility had struck him for the first time.

Pieter looked back toward the black spot across the fields where the Red Cap stood. "While madame stays and Rosalie stays to help others, my place is there," he said, quite simply, as if faithfulness were so common a thing as to be hardly considered commendable.

"But why not have them leave too?" persisted monsieur.

Pieter brought back his eyes to the duke's face in round surprise. "Why, there are many still left in France who need our help," he returned, as if that were answer that held no question.

"Ah, Pieter," cried the duke swiftly, "how little you know the lessons you have taught me in this one short day! But I shall carry them as long as I live."

Next whispered word they were off, across other fields and through other copses, until they struck the highway far beyond Faree Village. Then past other villages, whose twinkling lights were like the camp-fires of a wakeful enemy, on—on—on.

As they rode steadily forward, the night grew clear and cold, filled with restless longings, crowded with a thousand unknown possibilities that were not all unkind, and the countess, looking up at the dark arch of the sky, saw that it was powdered with a multitude of stars; she fancied each one a separate lantern of hope hung there

to keep them both keyed to the task before them. Several times she asked herself what life would be if all her hopes—that had grown to be the very stars of light to her lately—should suddenly go out in a storm of emotion. Then—what would life mean, for example, if the watch-dogs came and took this man and left her to meet a future that did not hold him?

At the thought she turned suddenly and caught his arm as he rode close beside her. Then, with a laugh that was unsteady, she released him. Instantly he was attention, but at his first syllable of concern she stopped him.

"No, no, it is nothing. I was frightened by a— a shadow. Sometimes the shadows come so close and near, that they seem real and they make me cry out," and she felt her face burn, hot as fire itself.

"I know. Shadow-monsters, especially those that we anticipate, are often so much worse than any possible reality," he assented half absently, and she wondered if he were a magician, that he read her thought so well.

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CHAPTER XIV

THE LADY OF THE BEECHES

It was three o'clock the following afternoon before the travelers were again in the saddle, after a morning spent in needed rest at a cottage that Pieter had named as a place of safety, and now it was in opposition to the persuasions of their humble hosts that they took to the road. All day the sky had been overcast, with a creepy chill in the air and so close was the rain that distant objects drew near and magnified themselves into double their usual size. Still both the duke and mademoiselle were so intent upon reaching the chateau as soon as possible that they determined to cover as much of the journey as the weather would permit, and to trust for shelter wherever it might be found.

Though they made fair time, hampered as they were by the need for keeping to small roads and through obscure villages, night came all too soon for their plans, bringing with the dusk the long-deferred rain. It burst upon them quite suddenly after its day-long menace, and big drops fell like little stones in the road, flattening to black discs in the brown dust. Then, with a rush, the storm was hurled upon them, crenching both in an instant. The duke searched the dusk with anxious eyes.

"I am afraid we must go on until we can find some suitable shelter."

"Yes, yes, let us go on," mademoiselle assented quickly.
"Why should we stop anywhere short of the chateau?"

We cannot be any more wet than we are, and it is not so many more miles away, you said."

Worn and tired as was the face she turned to his, it showed an indomitable will, and an eagerness to reach the haven of their hopes. After a second look at that face the duke nodded.

"Perhaps it will be as well to keep on," he agreed. "There would be no dry clothing or comfort in any place where we could stop now," and his air was one of new resolution.

Yet once, when the chateau lay only a few miles ahead, and he told her so for comfort, she asked him quite suddenly:

"You are still sure of your people?"

"Quite, although there will be few there to give us welcome save the house servants and their families, who have lived on the place their whole lives. When the Terror began they did not falter: why should I question their loyalty now?"

"But it is so difficult to believe that France still holds loyal hearts, especially when the master is away," she said wearily.

"Could you doubt Louis?" he reminded her. "I have known many in Marsillac village just as sure as he," and he spoke with a certain unconscious pride, that she felt instantly. These people were part of himself, part of his everyday living, his future theirs. Well, had not her people been equally a part of her life, and of her father's life, in those other days? And had not the earth opened and swallowed all sense of obligation, all fealty, all order? Why had this man escaped what others had suffered? What would he do now should the fate of those others

fall on him? Yet at the name of Louis her heart quickened, and she said nothing of the other things.

"Ah, Louis, yes! And the dear, big Susanne. Will they come to us safe, do you think?" and in talking of these two and of the *chateau*, with his great heart that could be moved only for others, the way grew short.

So the big gates of the chateau loomed suddenly and unexpectedly before them at last, after those weary miles had been covered, and mademoiselle fell silent. Not a light showed anywhere; the lodge was a bit of deeper blackness in the gloom, and the wind, rising fast, searched their soaked clothing with icy fingers as they waited for an answer to the duke's summons.

It was at the third call that a light showed at last, a feeble glimmer of a lantern swinging in a man's hand, and followed by a voice that was not at all gracious behind those locked gates.

"Be off, be off! I told you yesterday that no one is here. What do you mean by coming to spoil the peace of a poor gatekeeper? I have no shelter for you, and I don't care how bad the night may be. There's no room here for any one. Be off, do you hear?"

"Leon!" cried the duke.

"Eh —? Our Lady send us wisdom! But—no! The orders were strict. I was to admit no one. If you are one of the duke's friends I cannot —"

"Leon," cried the duke again. "Have you forgotten even my voice in three short weeks?"

"Ah! The dear Mother be praised! Only a moment, your grace. I'll fetch the key," and the light twinkled out of sight. In a breath the man was back with a couple of children at his heels and a woman's

voice calling through the darkness: "Oh, Leon! To keep the duke waiting at his own gate!"

"Hush, Clerie, it was my own order for caution," the duke interrupted. "Leon did well to show care," and as the gate swung inward, he reached swiftly and without explanation for mademoiselle's bridle, and held it with his own.

"But—why?" she protested, stirred into speech by an act so unusual and unexpected.

"It is an—an old custom," he explained in an undertone and hastily, in an embarrassment that she had never seen in him before, and holding both bridles in one hand, he led her horse beside his own through the gate. Even when he drew rein on the farther side and waited for the key to turn again in the great lock, he did not release his hold upon her rein. Seemingly oblivious to the fact that he retained it, he began to ask a hundred questions regarding the house and its people.

"Do they keep as brave a watch up there?" he finished at last, tossing his head in the direction of where the house doubtless stood.

Leon's pride swelled perceptibly. "Ah, the pompous Marcu and the rest have been lions according to their own showing, but I alone have encountered any who tried to enter. The woman yesterday and the man ——! Bah! I nearly called out the lads with the chapel bell, so long they persisted."

"A woman and a man? What were they like?" demanded the duke quickly.

"A great creature of a woman with a voice like a gong and a fist as big and heavy as a hammer. I kept out of its reach, be sure. She would have it that your grace

had sent her and showed me a bit of a blue trinket, heart-shaped, and she claimed that it was a token to let her through. I never saw her or her token in all my life, but no argument ——"

"Ah, Susanne and Louis!" cried mademoiselle. "And they were turned away!"

"But—but—she would give no name," protested the man, "and my orders were to admit no one. I meant no wrong—I ——"

"But where did they go? And did they leave no message?" cried the duke.

"None, save that the woman promised to return every day and to batter down the gates if I did not open them. I thought your grace was she come back."

"It was right to be careful, but when they come again let them pass in at once and send them up to the house. To-morrow morning come there thyself—I have much to hear and to say—and bring Lucien and Phillippe. I expect other guests: a *curé* and the Count de Beaurepeau and the Marquis de Martignon. Admit these at any time, but all others must wait until I give permission. And now, run on ahead and tell them I am bringing a guest to-night," he said, and the man was off on nimble feet. The duke turned with a sudden happy eagerness to mademoiselle.

"It is such a very little way now," he promised.

"God keep your grace and your grace's guest," called Clerie's voice through the dark, herself unseen.

"What a pretty welcome," cried mademoiselle, much touched. "Have you always permitted your people thus to share in the welcoming of those who come here?"

"Why not? My guests are theirs as mine to shield

and to shelter, and they feel a pride in sharing with me the honor of the house. It was my father's wish that all who entered his gate should feel a welcome from the moment they crossed the park lines, and his feeling has become for our people a part of their inheritance; his spirit is ploughed into the very acres they live upon. Until the Terror came it was a boast of the Du Marsillacs that the gates that led to their home were never closed on friend or foe; a particular pride that the men who held the name were able to defend the home against any odds. Perhaps you may guess something of what it meant when, in order to provide something of a haven for these loyal ones who looked to me for protection, I ordered the gates closed. The bitterness of all this long struggle, I think, came home to me when those rusty hinges moved for the first time since Richelieu held the reins."

But mademoiselle found no words of sympathy and she seemed but half to hear what he had said.

"Your grace's guest," she repeated softly, as if the words had a pleasant sound. Then, with a touch of shyness: "But if your grace has confidence in your people, why a precaution like this?" and she pointed to the bridles he still held in one hand.

Even in the dark she caught a return to the earlier, momentary embarrassment that she had noticed at the gate. He covered it, however, after a moment, with a short laugh.

"A custom as old as the house itself, I believe, and one of those quaint habits that are part of the inexplicable myths of old families. It has been the custom that when—well, when a certain guest comes for the first time to

Marsillac that guest shall ride at the left hand of the present head of the house and that he shall carry both bridles in his hand until they dismount at the house itself. I cannot explain the thing, although of course there's a family story tacked on, of one guest that was not so escorted—you know how such stories are like the sands of the sea in multitude. But this particular story I have always somehow liked and to-night—well, sometimes a man wants to be foolish and to indulge old fancies," and he laughed again in that self-conscious way that was so uncharacteristic.

Mademoiselle looked at him from the corner of her eye. She observed that his explanation had been no explanation at all and she tucked the subject away into a corner of her memory to be used later. What was this story that he refused to repeat? Mademoiselle's interest in it grew to heroic size, for no reason in the world save that it was denied.

The rain had ceased some time before; but, beneath the beeches that bordered the avenue, the night hung a pall of blackness. Ahead, now seen, now lost, Leon's lantern occasionally glimmered, a firefly in densest gloom. Suddenly the blackness became less dense, and mademoiselle was aware that they had entered an open space that rose steeply, curving at its summit as a wave that tosses on its crest an uneven outline. Mademoiselle drew a quick breath; that crest began to show lights, pin-pricked and growing momentarily more numerous, until a sudden square splash of ruddy orange on a flight of steps became an open, welcoming door.

Several hands were instantly at the horses' heads, and murmured sounds of pleasure came from several throats,

a pleasure that the duke's voice instantly reflected. Then he was on his feet, and was lifting her down.

Cramped with the cold and storm, and the long hours in the saddle, hardly crediting that comfort and safety—even if only a temporary safety, were hers at last, mademoiselle held to him for a breath, and she laughed a little brokenly.

"It seems hardly—real," she said.

His manner was quiet enough and his face was almost grave, but in his eyes a light was leaping as he looked down into the face she had lifted.

"That is it; hardly real that you are here," he cried quickly in that same low voice. But in another flash the look was gone, and he was wholly the duke, wholly the grand *seignior* when he took her hand and led her up the steps and into the brightness of the hall beyond.

"Welcome to Marsillac, countess," he said, with that dignified air of the courteous host. "Count everything here your own."

But before she could reply, he had turned away, hurriedly, she fancied, unaware that her eyes had been so hard to endure.

Almost before he had left her, men were hurrying on silent feet through the great hall, and a pretty young slip of a girl was taking mademoiselle's cloak with stifled exclamations of pity for mademoiselle's drenched condition.

Up-stairs a bright fire, newly kindled, was blazing in a great, stately room, and another maid was shaking pillows and rustling sheets under the canopy of the bed in the corner. In a fraction of time Marie, the little maid, was back with her arms full of clothing.

She was a most voluble little person, and she regretted

with a most distracting air of dismay, that mademoiselle's baggage had been so unfortunately lost. Of course those missing chests would come to-morrow or the day following, and meantime his grace hoped the countess would make use of these, the clothing that had been the lady mother's. His grace was in the most profound despair that he had no better at command.

Mademoiselle smiled wearily. It was exceedingly difficult to imagine his grace in anything like such a state as the one described, especially over so paltry a thing as clothes. Had she not found comfort in a peasant's wardrobe? And now here were things such as she had once known—was it in some past existence beyond measure of time?—soft linen, and fine lace, and rustling silk. She lifted the folds of the gown with faltering hands and the familiar perfume of lavender drifted out.

At the first scent the past few days surged over her, their horror emphasized by contrast with those other happy days, when each evening her mother had come to superintend mademoiselle's toilet with little touches of rearrangement and endearment. And now—those touches and that endearment would come for her never again. With a broken cry mademoiselle dropped her face in her hands.

Marie was at once in a flutter of consternation. His grace would be so furious if his guest was not served to her liking. What had she, Marie, done? If the clothes did not suit, others perhaps might be found. No? Not the clothes? But mademoiselle had seemed so quietly happy a moment before.

Mademoiselle lifted her face. Cold and weariness and hunger, she explained, were very upsetting, and oh, such

a bitter hunger! At the word another wrench of heart-hunger nearly upset her, but she made a brave showing after all and entered into the familiar ceremony of dressing with an interest that enraptured Marie.

At the end of the service, she was established in the big chair at last, with the fire crackling at her feet, and a tray came with the duke's compliments; as he knew she was far too tired to come down again that night he would not expect her, and he sent his good-night wishes.

Mademoiselle felt her face grow suddenly hot. This was the first time for ages and ages that they had not taken their supper together, even when that supper was only a bit of bread taken in the saddle with the stars for a canopy. Would this new roof bring changes? Mademoiselle felt suddenly smothered and drew away from the comfortable warmth of the leaping fire. What were cold and rain and icy wind after all?

While she ate she was glad to listen to Marie's chatter; so happy, so simple a companionship, so much a part of this new sense of hominess. Marie was delighted to reveal whole volumes of village history, and most absorbing information in regard to herself, and her family, and all the hopes and cares and sorrows of those who dwelt in Marsillac village. It was a recital in which the countess would have found small interest in other days, but which now became a light along a new path, illuminating the sombre lives of a people who, though of another caste, yet held emotions akin to her own.

These were his people. Among these names he had grown to be the man she knew. What part had they in the making of that strength and confidence? What were they now that they could mean so much to him?

Listening, groping, suddenly she knew. She saw through this girl's eyes what the master meant to his people, and what they gave in return. The bond between the two was breath, vitality, life to both. In destroying feudalism the new Republic had not taken into account exceptions such as this. Why? Instantly the answer flared into certainty, as of the hand that wrote on the wall. The very rareness of such a relation between master and man was the why. Had her father or her father's friends shared their guests and their personal interests with the peasants who toiled for them? Had she ever entered other gates to the welcome given by a gatekeeper's wife? Stranger than all else was the fact that this social equation had held under the strain when autocracy had gone down and red-handed Terror had not been able to establish its democracy because challenged by the world. And now, in a great wave of realization, she saw that those twin bars that she had seen first in the Place de la Concorde, black, upright, naked against a pitiless sky, had done more than to drop a shadow across her life, more than to send into her life this other life that for three days had held so close to her own; they were the pillars of a great gateway into an unknown country of a new understanding, a country of wider horizon and of deeper living, where existed a strange, new brotherhood binding her fast to those who sorrowed and who toiled.

Mademoiselle came back to the firelight and the table and to Marie's chatter with a sense of awakening.

Supper over and the tray taken away, Marie returned to lay out the things for the night. Now, having exhausted village interests, she embarked upon a sea of information regarding the various habits and customs of

the ducal house. She progressed with tolerable speed and clearness, past many stories of remote history, until she came to the doings of a certain unquiet spirit who was said to patrol the beech avenue on stormy nights and whose sobbing could frequently be heard above the wind in the trees.

"But why does she choose that particular place? And what is her grievance?" inquired mademoiselle, much amused at the evident conviction of the story-teller.

Marie left the bed she had laid open and came to stand quite close to her listener as if she felt greater confidence in the nearness of something of flesh and blood.

"Why, she was the only bride who ever rode into Marsillac whose bridle was not tied to that of the duke's own," she explained.

"Oh, yes, of course," and mademoiselle leaned back among her cushions and shielded her face from the fire with her hand.

"Mademoiselle the countess knows the story?"

"No," but the single syllable was encouraging.

"She was a young girl, a very, very beautiful young girl, they say, and she came from the south, where the grapes grow best. Some say that her eyes were just the color of ripe grapes and her lips were like the red wine that flows when the grapes are crushed, very, very beautiful. Of course she loved some one down there, a lad as young and as fine as she was lovely—for what maid, high or low, could shut her eyes when a fine man is near?"

Mademoiselle smiled with a queer little laugh. "And they were separated, of course?" she prompted.

"Yes, for her father needed money to clear his estates,

and he betrothed her to the Duke du Marsillac, a man past his prime, who was so lost in his musty old books that he had to be reminded by others that the name would die with him if he had no heir. So he stopped his stupid old studying long enough to write to her father who had once been his friend, and he offered to marry the daughter, though he had never seen her in his life.

"When all was ready, and the day set, the duke was seized with an attack of gout and could not leave the house. But as it was most unlucky to change the day, he ordered that she be brought to the chateau for the wedding. And her wicked old father—oh, the miserable! How I hate him!" and Marie stamped on the hearth, "he must have the money of course, and so he brought her himself. People say that if the old duke had once looked at her face he would have forgotten his gout fast enough and would have gone to meet her. He would listen to nothing about old customs, called them all foolery and an old woman's superstitions; so the poor young thing had to ride, all unknowing the dreadful curse upon a bride who came unwelcomed past the gate, with only her father for company to the steps below. It was her father who lifted her down, and when they both came at last into the library, there sat the old duke among his musty old books and he looked up at them and blinked with surprise as if he had forgotten all about their coming. Then he said: 'Yes, oh, yes, of course. Pray be seated and we will send for the *curé*.' Wasn't that most dreadful for that poor young girl? My heart bleeds for her—really, really."

Mademoiselle murmured her sympathy.

"And what sort of luck could he expect after that?"

The poor duchess was like a ghost always, and years passed and still no son came. Then, at last, was born a boy, with eyes like the grape eyes of his mother, and when she was told that it was a son, that poor young mother just gave one long sigh, as if a blessed release had come.

"Through all that time the old duke had had time to worry about the cutting off of his name, and so he cried aloud with joy: 'Oh, my son, my son!' Then the mother opened her eyes and looked at him. 'Yes, you have your son, but what about your son's mother who knew no welcome when she came first to your gates? For all these weary years I have known only neglect and despair, and now I shall not live to know even this son for whom I have given so much. But my story shall not be lost nor my life wasted; for as long as any live of the name I shall wander in the beech avenue on stormy nights to remind other dukes of what this duke has done, lest any other woman suffer here as I have suffered.' So ever since, when a bride first rides through the gates, the head of the house is careful to tie her bridle to his as a token that he will tie her future to his own, and will care for her as he cares for his own honor."

"A very pretty story, certainly," murmured mademoiselle from behind the shielding hand.

Marie's eyes were round with surprise. "Oh, but surely, mademoiselle means what a sad, sad story?" she ventured to hope.

But mademoiselle laughed, a low, happy laugh, such as she had laughed in the old happy days. And she arose, and touched the little maid's cheek with caressing fingers.

"Yes, of course it is a sad story, but it is so full of promise for—for others, don't you see? I suppose I was just thinking of those—others."

When Marie had tucked her at last into the huge bed, and had gone, leaving the curtains open to show the fire still bright and all the shadows leaping in the paneled corners, mademoiselle lay for long with wide-open eyes, listening to the wind storming in from the sea, bringing showers of rain to dash against the windows.

How strangely unreal, how exquisitely familiar, this feeling of security, of happiness, of rest! Never before had she quite understood what home meant. Then a new gust of wind rattled the sash and lashed the panes with its furious torrents. Mademoiselle turned her face toward the window quite as if she expected to see some one there. She laughed softly again and spoke half aloud:

"Dear Lady of the Beeches, how sorry I am that you are forced to-night to wander out there in the storm."

CHAPTER XV

"JUST YOU AS YOU USED TO BE"

MORNING brought only new splashes of rain drawn slantwise on gray windows, and, beyond these, trees that writhed and twisted in the wind. When Marie came on tiptoe to see if the countess were awake, she brought great news. Another guest had arrived in the early morning, a father *curé* with the face of an angel. Ah, mademoiselle knew him perhaps? Would she desire to see him then by and by? His grace had breakfasted with him and they were both in the library now. Marie would send some one to inform the duke that mademoiselle was going down.

But the *curé* was alone when mademoiselle entered the library and, seeing her glance wander questioningly about the room, he interrupted her attempt to tell him how glad she was that he had reached the chateau safely, and laughed as he patted her hand.

"My dear daughter, he has gone to arrange with some of his people for a boat to take us across the water," the *curé* explained, without finding it necessary to give the absent person a name.

"Oh, the duke?" inquired mademoiselle, as if the matter were one of the utmost indifference, but she flushed painfully.

Then the delight of the *curé* slipped over its bounds.

"Sometimes I wonder," he said, "if youth is blind, or

if youth only believes that age is too old to remember its own youth or to see anything," and he laughed again.

Mademoiselle hastily took refuge in questions regarding his journey and his plans.

Before long the duke returned. He was in riding dress and looked quite different from the black clad figure of yesterday; and, while he explained that he had been forced to alter his plan for crossing at once to England, it seemed to the girl that everything else about him had changed as well. His inquiries as to the health of the countess were all that a guest could demand or desire, but the very tones of his voice were cold and formal and she shrank from the alteration. What did it mean? Yesterday he had been so—different.

Whether or not he was aware of her disappointment she could not determine, for outwardly he was concerned with the difficulty of securing a vessel, a task that he had not yet been able to arrange. It was, of course, necessary to find a captain who could be absolutely trusted, and there were not many such. In the meantime, pending the arrangements, they must be content to wait at the chateau somewhat longer than they had planned, with what patience they could summon. His confidence in the ultimate success of his search seemed unshaken, but the delay was evidently annoying, though he affected to consider it trifling.

He talked with the *curé* of the political outlook, and discussed social questions that seemed to hold for him a deep interest, but which mademoiselle found stupid beyond measure. Both men turned to her occasionally, including her in their talk, but she refused to have part in it and she sat there feeling very lonely and discouraged

and forlorn. Again and again she wondered how she could have thought the recent journey and its nights of travel either uncomfortable or long. What is any difficulty, she asked herself bitterly, if it is shared by another whose heart beats warm with one's own? After a while she was glad to make some excuse to escape to her room.

All day long the storm held high revel out-of-doors, and the wind moaned and cried in the chimney. Mademoiselle, imprisoned indoors, shivered sometimes, but not from cold.

Late in the afternoon she wandered down-stairs into the great hall, and stood at the wide west window looking down the length of the drive to where the beeches made an arch against the sky. The rain had stopped some minutes before and the clouds in the west were growing thin and flying before a pursuing wind that showed no mercy. Suddenly they were gone and the sun instantly threw a wide band of gold across the whole west, transmuting every rivulet, every puddle and tiny pool into a liquid, golden splendor. The trees, lately dripping a gray, monotonous moisture, now carried yellow jewels on every leaf and twig, and beyond the sloping terrace, beyond the garden and the drive—everywhere—everywhere—other trees were shining, other pools were glowing with this wonder-color.

Mademoiselle threw open the window and leaned out, trying to gather in one great breath all the brightness that was gladdening her eyes, and warming her heart with its unspeakable hopefulness and beauty. She was standing thus when she saw a single horseman ride into the arch at the end of the avenue, black against the gold. He waved his hand when he saw her there, and came

straight on until he drew rein just under the window, turning only at that last moment to look with her at the gorgeous west, blinding now with its massive splendor.

"Isn't it—incomparable?" she cried to him.

When, in answer, he turned his face upward, it wore something of the brightness of that dazzling sky. "And, do you know, I felt quite lonely and melancholy a moment ago," he confessed, and with that color on it she fancied his face wore the look that she had grown to know so well while they were crossing France together.

"Yes, I know; I felt the same," agreed mademoiselle softly, and she began to believe, to hope, that the day had seemed quite as long to another as it had been for her.

Yet when the groom had taken his horse and he had come in, the duke had changed subtly again; he went at once to his room. He did not come down until just before dinner and then mademoiselle and the *curé* were both before the fire. She stole a sidewise glance at the duke and saw that he did not bring with him the look that she had surprised in his eyes.

While they waited, talking of indifferent things, a sound arose outside as if a hurricane were coming, and the man at the door turned a white face toward the duke. Marsillac arose at once, going to meet the incoming storm. When the door was opened, a fury, stopping for neither question nor permission, dashed past him, sweeping aside all obstacles, with poor Louis at her heels, seemingly half dead with fright and dismay. She came to an abrupt halt in the hall, still hurling her dissatisfaction behind her.

"Out of my way," she cried to the two footmen who

followed, incoherent with apologies and explanations. "Eh? What's that? The duke? What is any *ci-devant* duke to Susanne Marci, a good citizeness of the Republic? All dukes are dead long since, remember that, and only citizens exist now. *Ma foi!* One would think that the widow of a hero was a nobody up in these outlandish parts. Did any of these ignorant ones ever hear of a patriot? A duke indeed! Let him try to keep me back!"

But just at this moment she caught sight of mademoiselle who had hurriedly risen, and Susanne rushed toward her in great strides that threatened to sweep the countess from her feet.

"Eh, my bird, my bird! All safe and blooming like a great flower! Eh, but Susanne is glad to see thee. And they thought to keep me from thee, the donkeys in livery yonder. Me, thy Susanne!"

"Ah, Susanne! Your very self!" cried mademoiselle, unexpectedly finding herself in something of the same incoherent condition as that of the servants. Susanne's vigor was so huge, so unusual, in this sober setting of restfulness and polished ease.

"And very like to be no Susanne at all!" continued the Amazon, "for the pig at the gate yesterday had no brains, though I showed him thy little blue heart. He stared at it as stupidly as if he had never seen a jewel in all his life, and he cocked a pistol as if I was a thief. Only that Louis dragged me away I would have killed him! And to-day he gave some tale of a *ci-devant* duke returned to his home and of changed orders—imbecile, as if any would believe what he would say."

Du Marsillac offered his hand.

"Have you forgotten another old friend, Susanne, in your joy at finding mademoiselle safe?" he said. Susanne turned and seized his hand with a hearty grip.

"So! You are still at her heels, citizen-soldier? Well, a faithful watch-dog after all, I'll swear, though I could not feel sure of it at first back in the old home. Now I see you have lost your notary's coat as well as your uniform, hey? And I see you carry yourself boldly as if you were used to big halls and a lot of imbecile pigs forever at your elbow," with a scowl upon the discomfited footmen. "Well, I'll forgive you even your brave airs, for you have brought the dear little child through thus far safely."

"I feel much honored," laughed the duke.

"Susanne, this is the Duke du Marsillac," cried mademoiselle, who could not quite reconcile this extravagant democracy with what seemed due the head of a great house. The sense of feudalism was as the very blood in her veins, and even the experiences of the past days could not wholly expel it.

"A duke? Then I like him less than ever; indeed I want him not at all," answered Susanne promptly. "If he called himself a good patriot there would be honor in that, or if he gave up his title like the dear Beaurepeau—ah, that was a heart for you, made of iron and yet flowing with pity for his suffering countrymen. A great man died that day."

"No, no, he is not dead," corrected mademoiselle; "he is coming here to go with us to England. But Susanne, why are you less strong than he? Why can you not give up your prejudice against titles and those born

of noble blood? Why do you suffer me, then, to stand so close to your heart?"

"Why, how could you help your birth, poor lamb?" cried Susanne promptly, with characteristic logic.

"Let her call me what she likes," murmured the duke, still smiling. "What is any name or title compared with the bigness of her heart?"

"There," interrupted Susanne, having overheard the low words, "there, now you are talking sense, and I will give you a handle to your name, if that is what you want. You should have been a soldier and given your strength to your country, so I'll call you citizen-soldier to remind you of your duty." She took off both hat and shawl as she spoke, and shook them above the fire to dry them, quite as if she were prepared to stay, and apparently as completely at home and as unconcerned for the future as if she had spent her whole life between these walls and as if no Terror were shaking France at that very moment.

But neither that night, nor for many days to come, did the duke find the vessel and the captain he wanted. The business grew to be a slow process, and a harassing one, for everything must be done in secret and the days were flying fast. Yet, on the other hand, mademoiselle was not sorry for the rest and the reprieve from travel, not knowing much of the disappointments the duke hid from her. Here she felt so safe, and far, far away seemed Paris, with its hideous daily spectacle and the furies in the streets. Here the trees were growing all green and the birds were going to housekeeping, oh, so many of them, overhead. Almost as beautiful was this as her dear south country with its blue hills and the smell of grape buds in the spring air.

So, while they waited, the fifteenth of April came and found them still in the chateau, with no apparent nearness to the crossing of the channel. On that particular evening the duke had not come home, and mademoiselle and the *curé* had dined alone. Afterward the *curé* was called away on some mission in the village—for he had found great joy in ministering to these simple people, and mademoiselle left alone went out and stood a long time at the railing of the terrace, listening. Everything was so quiet, so peaceful, full of the restfulness of the coming night.

After a while she moved slowly down through the garden to where a grassy opening between the trees sloped very gently to the border of a brook that ran tinkling among its stones. Every evening of late she had grown restless for the big sky and the wind tossing the trees, but until to-night she had found it hard to invent excuse to come out into the young spring darkness. Once or twice she had tried to ask the duke to come with her, here where wonderful sounds, hardly heard at other times, surged and whispered; but each time she had hesitated and failed. The nights were so full of him, and of their journey together; but of a different man from this duke who lived in the great house and was carefully exact in every word, in every glance, who exhausted every means to please her, yet who withheld that which would have pleased her most, himself. The invisible barrier between them had grown daily since they had come here, a thing as light as a spider's web at first, yet ever present. Often, when it had troubled her most, she had reminded her faltering courage of the night outside the Red Cap when he had been on the verge of

telling her something and when she had promised him both faith and patience. Recalling that night, she had stiffened her heart, but to-night it failed. Life seemed so empty, meaningless, flat. She felt again, as so often of late, that if she could once call him out here into this familiar darkness, the old monsieur would return. And if he came, what would she have to tell him?

She found a seat on a little mound and, chin in hands, elbows on knees, she watched the stars shine in the brook, a band of jet spangled with brilliants. Seated there, many thoughts came; and among them all, like a strand of silver, ran ever the question: If he came what could she say? And just here each time she would stop, with a rush of warm blood at her heart and begin all over only to come back to the same question.

At length it occurred to her that she would like to make the attempt and see what would happen—just one foolish little call into the dark. No one could possibly hear and it would be such fun to try.

"Monsieur?" And again a little louder, "Monsieur?"

"Yes, yes," came the answer instantly from above, and then hasty steps coming fast.

Now—oh, dear! What should she say? How explain? She felt all a-tremble and she clasped her hands tightly. How foolish she had been. When he asked what she wanted, how could she answer: "Just you, monsieur, just you yourself as you used to be!" How he would stare. No, no, she could never tell him that.

Now he was here, and he didn't ask any question at all.

"They told me you had gone to your room," he said, in the most commonplace way, "and I could hardly

believe my ears when I heard your voice way down here. Are you quite warm? The air seems to carry its chill so late this year."

No, no, this was not the man she had summoned, the man who had ridden with her through those nights. This was the dreadful new duke, who spoke a new language, and who would not dream of asking unanswerable questions.

"I believe I am cold," said mademoiselle rising with a little shiver. "I must have been here longer than I thought."

But he did not turn to go up to the house. Instead he stood looking down at the shining jet brook, as if he saw something there. The moon, nearing its full, came slanting across the garden and poured its silver into the band of jet.

"Franz looks much better," announced the duke unexpectedly.

"Franz?" she echoed.

"You did not hear them come? They have been in the house nearly an hour. De Martignon talks of going in the morning; some business of his estate, I fancy. You know he was threatened with confiscation some time ago, but his brother's Jacobinism saved him." Another pause, then the duke again, speaking reflectively: "They brought strange news indeed."

"A new danger?" cried mademoiselle quickly, anticipating him.

"No; and yet, perhaps, an increase of the old." He raised his head and turning looked at her quietly. "Danton died—as they all go sooner or later—in the Place de la Concorde, on the fifth."

"Danton? Ah——! So the wolves have turned on one another when there are no other victims left?"

"It has been coming for some time, but many hoped that Danton would hold out and prove stronger than the Green-Eyed One. Now Robespierre stands alone at the very top; but the end cannot be far off. Danton is said to have prophesied that his going would pull down the other inevitably."

"The dear God send it be true!" cried mademoiselle, with all the old caste-hatred in her voice.

"But with Robespierre absolutely untettered, what may not be done in his name? If, as some hold, he is the devout enthusiast, loving destruction only that order may come in, then why does he permit his agents such freedom? It is hard to determine anything absolutely in these days of upheaval, but one thing is sure: we may expect Brouillon or some of his emissaries at any hour now. Leon at the gate and the lads at the house are an army—not in numbers but in courage and devotion, and they could keep a regiment outside for a while. But it is not a regiment that we have to fear: Brouillon's methods are intrigue, and secrecy, and the trick of the spy. He never moves in great numbers, but insinuates himself into the very holy of holies in a man's heart, learning to strike at the vital spot unerringly."

He had gone back to that intent study of the little brook, while he talked, as if its silver path led him far afield and into the trick of Brouillon's reasoning. Mademoiselle, seeing that his speech was but thought spoken aloud, made no effort to interrupt him. After some moments of silence he began again, but this time there was

a new cadence in the quiet voice, admitting her directly into his consciousness.

"It is my despair that even now I have not found the vessel we have been needing for so long, and a second torment that when we least are prepared the chateau may become a very nest for Brouillon's spies." He looked up, meeting her eyes testingly, as if he desired to say much, yet feared to disturb her unnecessarily. "I do not tell you these things to add to your sufferings, but to put you on your guard. Meantime, be assured that Philippe is leaving no cove or pier unsearched for a vessel, and any moment may bring success. But—forgive me if I seem exacting—but, will you give me your promise meantime not to leave the house, not even to come here unless—unless I am with you? Is this too much to ask? I was choked with fear when I heard your voice to-night; I cannot bear to have you beyond my reach, so I want your promise."

Ah! At last! Bending close to her in the old, confident way, the old ring in the words, the old look in the eyes, the old, familiar, priceless monsieur demanding—pleading—when he knew he had without the asking! Was it only when danger loomed near and big that the old monsieur was able to creep out of the duke's shell? Then welcome any danger, every adversity, if they brought such things as these. Mademoiselle's indrawn breath was like a flame of gladness.

"If you will stay—you—you!—to guard me, I will stay—or go—anywhere in the world," whispered mademoiselle, and, standing, she lifted her head straight up, royally, fully the countess, but a countess that in every line, every breath, every glance was wholly the woman.

Eyes, lips, face ; each in turn duplicated for him what they had been that evening at the Red Cap, only intensified, glorified, as it were, with these past days of baffled waiting. He saw the sweeping line of the throat as it curved to meet the chin ; he saw the long lashes lifted, revealing two panes of clear glass behind which her soul was shining ; he saw the slender figure in its short-waisted gown chiseled against the purple-blue of the night, Carrara marble newly flushed with life. And being a man, and loving her past all measuring, he gave a great cry. Where now were all those days of conflict with his own soul ? All the struggle in the name of honor, and the tight grip upon his own speech ? Gone—in a single sweep of lashes that had unveiled those eyes !

" Ah ! Dear God ! " he cried. " And I am—tied ! "

A strong man's cry it was, and it rang with the sound of a despair that refused to know defeat. For it was full of a struggle and of a dominating will that held the bonds of honor drawn hard and tight.

But the sound was heard by another, for from the terrace above an answering cry came, and some one came toward them, running in uneven leaps and bounds.

" Monsieur, your grace ? You are here ? "

It was Louis, and his face was seamed with a new anxiety.

" What news ? " cried monsieur, for there was no mistaking the man's manner.

" Mademoiselle cannot be found. Susanne says she is not in her room, and —— "

" Mademoiselle is here, Louis, " said the countess shortly.

" What a blessed relief. My heart was frozen with

fright when Susanne came down some moments ago with her discovery, and every one at the chateau is in a great fright and searching, for Philippe came in from the village a while ago and reported two strangers asking questions there just before dark."

"We must go up to the house, of course," agreed the duke, but he spoke in a stifled voice.

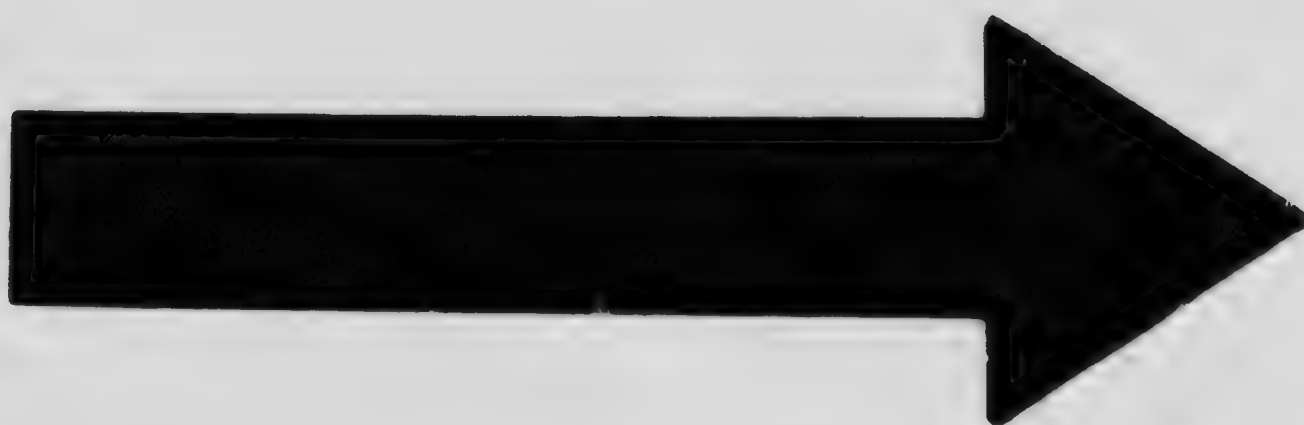
Mademoiselle turned without a word and moved at his side across the lawn.

At the foot of the steps the duke spoke again. "De Beurepeau will be impatient to see you. Will you receive him in the *salon*?"

"No," mademoiselle spoke hastily and she did not look at him. "No, not to-night—anywhere. Say I am tired—say to-morrow—say whatever you please, for I will not to-night." Then, with an imperious gesture: "But I have a word for Louis."

The duke bowed and went up the steps. Mademoiselle also mounted two before she turned to say through tight shut teeth:

"Oh, how I wish you were just one fraction less careful, less faithful! For I want, down deep in my heart, to kill you to-night!"



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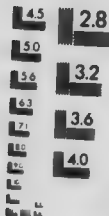
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CHAPTER XVI

IN THE LIBRARY

As the duke entered the library De Beaurepeau turned in his chair and his face fell.

"Mademoiselle?" he asked.

"She came in a moment since. She was quite near the house after all," explained Du Marsillac.

"She will be down soon?"

"She will not come to-night. She begged me to say she was extremely tired and would see you to-morrow," and the duke strolled to the window and leaned indolently against its frame.

"But you saw her," Franz reminded him jealously.

For a single moment the duke did not answer. Then he said :

"I left her with Louis at the foot of the steps and she begged me to give you that message."

"But just for a moment ; it seems so strange that she should be out with Louis," Franz said, evidently searching for simple motives that at present seemed rather baffling. He looked at his friend's back, but it was not illuminating.

A little silence fell ; then monsieur, evidently feeling the call for a more hospitable attitude, turned and, crossing the room, flung himself into a chair—and promptly forgot his guest so completely that De Beaurepeau lifted his eyebrows in rather an amused surprise.

Between the two men the fire crackled comfortably

and drew caricatures of both on the ceiling. Out-of-doors, the wind, rising fast since nightfall, now rattled the loose window-sash, as if to remind them of what one might expect later in the night if one dared to venture abroad. Once Franz leaned forward to mend the fire, and when the breaking log sent a live coal beyond the confines of the hearth the duke thrust out his foot automatically and kicked it into the ashes again, but immediately he lapsed again into complete self-absorption.

De Beaurepeau, after another glance at him, arose and began to pace the room, his recent wound still causing a slight limp as he moved.

"What a glorious moon," he said as he passed the window, halting sufficiently long to admire the stretch of white lawn and black shadow. "This would have been a fine night to cross," he added.

"Very," returned his friend without shifting his position.

Franz looked at him, halting again to make sure that the apparent indolence was not indifference. Then he moved to the couch that flanked the farther side of the fire and as he stretched himself upon it, hands beneath his head, it was evident that he was nearing some resolution.

"The fire rather spoils the thought of a night at sea, doesn't it?" he inquired, forcing conversation so palpably that the duke roused himself.

"April, and still winter," he assented, yawning and stretching his arms wide. His imagination was always less intense than that of his companion.

"But, after all," said Franz deliberately, "we should really desert the fire and take to the sea."

"Of course, if we could; but we can't," agreed the duke. Again conversation languished.

After a little the duke arose lazily and, with another stretch of the arms, went again to the window. Franz gazed after him curiously. Never had he seen Marsillac like this. Monosyllabic he had been often, and brusque too, but now that recent absorption descended upon him again, wrapping him close, not so much as a flicker of an eyelash to tell what was passing behind those steady eyes.

De Beaurepeau's voice sounded suddenly loud even to himself when he spoke at last.

"What do you see out there, Victor?"

"Clouds—furies—galloping fast, and trees, singly or in pairs, tortured, mad, dumb things, trying to stand against the wind."

The answer had come instantly and Franz moved restlessly.

"Dumb as they are, they certainly make the devil of a poor companion of you," he said. Then as the other continued to stand voicelessly in the depth of the window he added almost pœvishly:

"Do sit down. I want a word with you. Let me tell you that the trees are not the only sufferers to-night."

The impatience was unmistakable, yet for another fraction of time the duke did not move and his broad back seemed to the irritated consciousness of De Beaurepeau to be obtuse and unyielding. Then Du Marsillac turned and moved over to his chair, his face faintly solicitous.

"It's unfortunate that your leg should trouble you so much," he said, lifting his feet to a second chair. "What

did Dr. L'Hommedieu say to-day? Can't he suggest something that will ease the pain?"

A quick imprecation escaped Franz. "On my soul, Victor, sometimes I believe that you are purposely stupid," he said, with a convalescent's irritability. Then, with a quick change, he added: "I told you I had something to say. I had no thought of physical pain when I said suffering. My leg is the least of my worries," and he laughed almost shamefacedly, to cover his outbreak.

Du Marsillac met his glance quietly; he seemed to be turning the other's accusation over in his mind.

"I am dull—more than usually dull to-night," he agreed equably. "I'm afraid I am not up to discussing anything. Can't it wait until to-morrow?"

"No, for it is too many to-morrows now that is the basis of my complaint."

"Complaint?" inquired the duke, still quietly, but with brows lifted.

"Well, perhaps that is rather strong, but I feel the thing too keenly to search for words. I did not dream when we came to-day that we should find you still here."

The duke smiled a trifle wearily, as if he could share the other's surprise, but he did not speak to defend or explain.

"The fact is, I—well, I hardly know how to explain it for the thing is so hard to grasp and to put into words, but to-night I have felt in your manner a certain lack of enthusiasm."

"Yes?" said the duke without surprise. Franz moved in his place quickly as if his friend's equanimity were irritating. "I am speaking of Celeste."

"Well?"

"You do not push her interests as you did. You have let her linger here, on French soil, although you know that every moment may bring detection and disaster. She has been here twelve days! And more than all, you have given me no immediate prospect of leaving."

A faint color rose in the duke's face, as if quick words were battling for utterance, but De Beaurepeau was too engaged with his anxiety to observe the other keenly. Du Marsillac's voice was level and a trifle flat when he answered.

"I thought you knew that I was negotiating for a vessel," he said.

"But where is it?" demanded Franz in turn.

"I have not been able to secure one yet. Meantime I feel that the countess is quite as safe here as she could be anywhere save in England."

"Safe? *Mon Dieu!* You know there is no safety for her in all the length of France. Delay at such a time is—incomprehensible. You have overcome all other obstacles without hesitation, and now to be balked by such a thing as this!" He surveyed the duke from behind frowning brows of anxiety. "Heavens! Your delay and—well, your indifference are driving me half mad, Victor. If you loved her a hundredth part as much as I love her, you would search every cove and inlet and bay until you had a craft of some kind."

"Perhaps," assented the duke somewhat dryly. He lifted a coal from the mass at his feet and lighted his pipe. Then, leaning back in the great chair, he puffed with stolid calm, but behind the smoke his eyes shone bright.

"It seems strange that Celeste can no longer excite your sympathy, your desire for service—no, not that, of course, for you have served nobly already, and I appreciate your devotion and loyalty to me more than I can ever say; but her very extremity of helplessness should appeal to you, it seems to me. But then, I am her lover and of course I see through prejudiced eyes. And being her lover, how can I fail to urge haste and eagerness and renewed devotion on your part, when I have entrusted more than my life itself to your keeping? And you—you procrastinate!"

Du Marsillac laughed unfeelingly. "My dear Franz, you have mentioned both those facts several times before," he remarked. The tone stung De Beaurepeau to new querulousness.

"But what other argument can I use? Celeste must not waste another day here. What shall I say to remind you of——"

"Nothing," interrupted the duke suddenly.

Franz's eyes opened wide. The tone had been curt to brusqueness.

"Do not lose your temper, Victor," he said. "I am only saying that I do not understand——"

The duke laid his pipe upon the table, almost as if he struck the wood in impotent anger.

"There is nothing to understand. Urging, arguments of any kind are worse than useless. The countess will leave here whenever a craft—any craft—can be found to take her. Until that hour you must wait, as I do, and endure with what courage you can. Your problem and mine is one of time, and God knows that is often cruelly short!"

The words fell hurriedly, crowding one another with a certain savage intentness that seemed to De Beaurepeau more repression than speech. The duke had not lifted his gaze from the fire for a second, yet his voice had unconsciously betrayed something that face and eyes had carefully hidden. Franz leaned forward, breathlessly intent upon that mask of a face.

For a long moment no one spoke; De Beaurepeau's face filled with a rushing emotion, with an awakening that seared and burned its way to his brain. The lover needs no interpreter when his idol is approached by another, and Franz listened and looked with a lover's ears and eyes.

After a long scrutiny De Beaurepeau sat up, but he moved stiffly as a sleeper suddenly awakened moves to answer a call instinctively, but without definite intention.

"Wait as *you* do?" The words were a challenge.

The duke turned slowly, and met his gaze. "With my patience," he repeated distinctly.

Franz sat quite still for another lapse of time, but the eyes of both were like the coals that lay at their feet.

"What right have you—what interest have you?" De Beaurepeau demanded at last, fiercely.

"I have given my word to set mademoiselle safe on English soil, and that gives me full right to use my judgment," returned the duke, with an attempt to assume his earlier manner, as if the revelations in a man's eyes counted for nothing.

Franz started up in a frenzy of alarm.

"Your word, your word!" he cried. "Do not try to deceive me farther. I know now—I understand—fully. Your very voice betrays your faithlessness. Great heav-

ens! Is there no honor, no loyalty anywhere? Can one not trust his friend? Ah, now it is plain why you refuse to hasten her going. Every day you count as just so much snatched from a future that belongs to me! You hold her here because you have lost the self-denial to send her to safety. This passion—this disloyal passion—is sending you to the uttermost of dishonor, depriving you of a sense of what you owe friendship, of what is due her, of every obligation, of——”

“Command your tongue,” ordered the duke briefly, leaning forward now with his hands gripping the arms of the chair and every line in the tense figure held ready to spring to his feet. “Do you want the servants to listen to your delusions, to your insane jealousy?”

But the warning only awakened new violence in De Beaufort. He paced the floor unevenly, his voice increasing in pitch as his denunciations accumulated.

“She shall leave this roof to-night! Not another moment can she remain where—just God! He a traitor, trying to lure her from me, trying to hold her against me! Crippled and weak as I am, I am still able to hold my own against a false friend. You shall see, you shall see!”

His frenzy, so hopelessly impotent, so foreign to anything that Du Marsillac could understand, was nevertheless terribly real, and pity smothered the rising anger of the duke. One cannot hold a child accountable with the measure of a man's accounting, he reflected, and a somewhat scornful sufferance mingled with his pity, as he laughed shortly.

“Be quite at rest,” he said. “We men of Marsillac have never yet been so hard pushed for wives that we

have had need to steal them from friends," and his eyes flashed.

A queer little sound at the door, and the duke was on his feet in a leap, whirling around the big chair. Celeste de Lavarolle stood there with a smile on her lips, her hand on the curtain.

"I have changed my mind," she said, "for it seems lonely up-stairs in those great rooms. May I come in?" She did not wait for permission, however, but moved toward Franz. "Besides, I want to tell Franz how glad I am to find him recovered." But before she reached De Beaurepeau she halted, looking from one to the other of the two men, both suddenly voiceless. "Perhaps I intrude?" she said.

There was an indistinct protest from the duke, which she seemed to accept as a welcome. The easy smile still lingered on her lips when she neared Franz, and offered her hand.

"The duke is not more glad than I to see you safe here," she said. "We have talked of you often, and wondered how you were."

De Beaurepeau bowed over her hand, seemingly fighting for speech control. The duke shoved forward a chair, but she shook her head.

"No, I want to be close to the fire. It looks so cozy and comfortable here. Please go on with what you were saying. I have wanted all my life to know what men talk about when they have no women to listen. This is my chance."

She moved to the fireplace, leaning her temple against the high mantel, and waited for the requested information. Then, as neither of the men found words, she

laughed softly. "I believe you are born afraid of me," she told them.

The duke's answering laugh was a trifle constrained, but he dropped obediently into his chair, for she had ordered it with a gesture.

"We talk of lovely woman of course, first, last and always," he told her, and though his tone was light he looked at her narrowly, for it was hard to determine just how much she might have overheard at the door. Was that a faint flicker of consciousness in her averted face, or was it only firelight?

"That sounds interesting, but it tells nothing at all. Franz, pray sit down. You stand so still, and you look so fierce. I might almost believe that I interrupted a duel, or something equally impossible, your face is so savage; and you haven't told me a single word about how glad you are to find us here with all that journey behind us. I suppose the duke has told you how hard he has found it to get a boat?"

But De Beaurepeau did not move, save to pull his moustache. He bit his lip, and looked down, for he could not meet her eyes. Glancing up in surprise, the countess caught the contagion of suspicion, and misreading his manner, spoke again quickly, with a step forward.

"You are keeping something from me?" Then, as neither answered, she went on hurriedly: "Do not be afraid to tell me. Suspense is a thousand times worse than any reality. Have—have they found our hiding-place?"

She appealed to the duke, and the unconscious choice between the two stung Franz to new tortures.

"We must leave here to-night, Celeste," he said quickly, making an effort to speak calmly. "It is no longer the place for you, and too much valuable time has now been lost."

"I can be ready whenever you like," she agreed. "But first, what is this new danger?"

"A false friend—worse than any other evil that a man or woman can know," cried De Beaurepeau bitterly.

She had turned as if to move toward the door, but now she halted, in pained surprise. She was close to the duke's chair, and looked down upon him in instant questioning. He was still seated and apparently unmoved.

"What does he mean?" she asked the duke.

But neither man answered, although Du Marsillac rose and straightened as if he would speak, but desisted for some reason that she could not fathom. The countess looked from one to the other in gathering alarm. Something that she saw in De Beaurepeau's face, however, made her turn swiftly again to the duke.

"But you are going with us?" she cried.

Du Marsillac met her eyes with a long look. She saw that his face had changed subtly in these last few moments, and she had the feeling as she stood there, looking up, that something within this man was being consumed before her eyes, inch by inch, moment by moment. Her own heart was leaping while she waited, and a dreadful fear was dawning. Never once had thought of a possible separation this side England touched her, and England was always so shadowy and so much a part of an uncertain future. The fear of his capture, to be sure, had been hers, but that always brought a sureness that she would share it. But now—what did Franz

mean? What did the duke's own silence mean? One may lose an arm in some dreadful calamity, but before the accident one's imagination cannot fully paint the changed and crippled future. Celeste understood something of the recoil and shrinking that such a loss would promise in advance, as she stood waiting for the duke to speak.

"No, I believe I will not go," he said at last, quietly, but as if each word were hard to pronounce.

"But why, why?"

"The count so prefers. He is your rightful guardian. He believes that he has reasons. He will take you to safety himself."

Mademoiselle did not look at Franz. Instead she drew one step nearer the duke, and her eyes did not waver as she looked up at him.

"Do you really believe that I should go without you? Have these past days together taught you nothing after all? Do you think that you alone in all the world have faithfulness? The youngest girl in France—princess or peasant—knows what friendship means."

But the duke turned away from her lifted face, from the little resolute mouth that could not quite hide its quivering. He caught the back of a chair and gripped it hard, the knuckles showing like ivory through the drawn flesh. De Beaurepeau was beside them in a rush.

"Celeste, Celeste, you do not understand! God! That I must be the one to undeceive you! This man is not my friend—nor your friend, for he seeks to take you from me!"

"Have a care," cried the duke in a low voice, but hotly, as if his endurance was being stretched too far.

"I cannot dispute your right to take Mademoiselle de Lavarolle wheresoever you will, but you have no right whatever to impute to me intentions that you have merely assumed. I am well aware that I cannot detain either of you—nor have I the smallest desire to try—beyond your wish to stay here; but I must protest most earnestly against a journey imposed upon the countess to-night. No vessel has been found to cross the water, and it is akin to madness to go out in search of shelter with only the wind for a roof. The house is quite large enough to hold us all without meeting, and you both know you are welcome here as long as you will stay."

"She cannot stay another hour—not a moment," cried De Beaurepeau stubbornly. "Tell him, Celeste, that you will not," he pleaded.

Mademoiselle looked from one to the other, her face quite as white as those she saw. The agitation of Franz touched her with a new fear, for strong and unexplained emotion in another always arouses in us the secret thing we most fear.

"What has the duke done that you refuse his help?" she asked, turning to De Beaurepeau at last.

"He has planned to steal you from me, Celeste—from me, his friend, whom he promised to serve to the last drop of his blood. Curse him a thousand times! A Judas!"

"You mean—he has no right to feel that way?" she persisted, as if groping for a light that was withheld. "Do I understand—he is already married? Did he mean that when he said he had no need to steal a wife from a friend?"

Something very quick and vital leaped in the duke's face as he swung toward her.

"No," he answered for himself, with quick breathlessness, and he looked at her with no remembrance of another's presence. "Why do you ask any one that? You know. I told you in the cottage that morning, you remember."

She turned away, but not before both men saw the crimson that flooded her face.

"Then, why——? What other cause——?" she stammered. "What right have you, Franz, to—to question?"

The duke drew slowly back from her. He lifted his face as if his cravat choked him, and gropingly he reached for the chair and his hands closed on it again.

"Ah, Celeste!" De Beaurepeau's cry was an accusation. "You are all I have in the whole world. Every thought is for you, every breath that I draw is yours! I could not live without the thought that some time—some future—would bring you to me. That night at the Red Cap you told me that you loved me, and your father gave you to me long ago. Through all the sorrow and suffering since I have always believed that a new time would dawn for us that would give you to me in fulfillment of the old bond between us. From prison your father wrote to me begging me to save you, my wife that was to be!"

"My father—wrote you—that?" cried mademoiselle, and there was no crimson in her face now. She gazed at De Beaurepeau with a strained, frightened look.

He drew a slip of paper from his pocket and held it toward her. She accepted it, looking at him, however,

with the desperate look that a child has when it looks for a reprieve. Then her eyes fell to the paper in her hand, and she read it slowly, again and again, letting the hand that held it fall finally at her side with a gesture of surrender.

"Yes, it is quite true. He pledges his 'little girl' And he wrote it the day before he died."

But she had no tears for the writer now. The strained expression in her face deepened, but no tears came.

"It was his last thought for you," Franz reminded her.

"Yes, yes, I know." Then, with a rush of hope:

"He knew you had planned for my escape?"

"No, for I dared not trust any messenger, even the one he had sent me; but I sent to him my glove, as a token that I would do all in my power and that last day he wore it pinned on his breast, knowing that if I saw I would understand his trust in me. And you know that I have lived true to that pledge—you know that—to this very hour. Can you believe that I have no claim, when he gave you to me when he died, Celeste? Have you the wish to hold back what he gave and what I have earned?"

She lifted her eyes, looking at him. And her voice was drearily tired. "Death seems so easy and so little—sometimes," she said.

No one of the three moved for a moment after that. Then Franz spoke again, taking up his persuasion, but the eagerness had gone out of his voice.

"That is why we must go, my Celeste, why no one can be trusted to ——"

She lifted her hand, stopping him.

"Do not speak of trust! This is only a matter of

what must be done. If my father pledged my life to you as a reward for saving it—take it, you have earned it fully. You have kept your promise to him to the letter, —with the help of another. If he died any less despairingly, believing that he had planned for the best, I will find my comfort in remembering that. But the love I spoke of in the Red Cap was not love such as you hold for me. I cannot give you that—ever. And do not forget that there are things in life, other things besides loyalty to those who are no longer here—things that must be pushed aside for that loyalty, but that are greater and better and dearer than that, a million, million times ! ”

She turned toward the mantel, drooping against it in unconscious renunciation. She did not hear his answer, nor what he said afterward to the duke, although she was conscious that he spoke with resolution but softly, as one lowers the voice in the presence of the dead. Well, what was more dead than the future ? Where were the hopes that she had found in the garden only that very night ? Then, with a choking breath, mademoiselle had taken a step toward the speakers. What was that awful thing that Franz was saying to the duke ?

“ No, I think it better for us all that it should be settled to-night. Will you send for the *curé* ? He will not hesitate when he understands.”

“ Oh, no, no ! Not to-night ! ” Her frightened voice rang startlingly loud. “ Oh, no, I—oh, no, no ! ”

There was nothing now of the woman sacrificing herself for what seemed duty. It was a passionate, rebellious girl who felt her helplessness.

Franz turned to her soothingly. “ But, Celeste, it is so much better. Then I shall have the right to protect

you. The duke will agree with me I am sure when he thinks it over. He would not hesitate at anything that was best for you, and in the time to come you will understand better than now how many complications this marriage to-night will solve for us all."

In a flash mademoiselle was beside the duke, who stood motionless in his place. She caught his arm with both hands, and looked up into his face with frightened eyes.

"Oh, you wouldn't do that! Not to-night! It is so dreadfully soon. Some time I will—oh, I will—but not to-night! You wouldn't—ah, you couldn't, could you?"

Afterward she remembered how tense those muscles had seemed under his sleeve, how unbending the straightened elbows, and how long it was before he spoke. But now, in the white passion of her fear, she saw only the grim, fixed face, and the eyes that seemed so strangely like the coals they looked upon.

"No," said the duke slowly, "no, I could not!"

Then suddenly she felt weak and wholly dependent upon this iron man. A sob of relief shook her, and she cried again, shaking his arm: "And you will not let them do this thing?"

"No," he answered in that same tone.

Then, still holding his arm, she leaned her head against it and broke into a storm of weeping. And for long he did not move, a pillar of strength of which she was vaguely, gratefully conscious. She did not know that through all that time he did not once look at her nor so much as glance at the head on his shoulder, nor that once, when Franz, unable to endure more, took a step

forward as if to speak, the duke turned his eyes only and looked at him. De Beaurepeau drew no nearer.

At last, when the sobs had given place to a more quiet weeping, the duke seemed to become human again.

"Come," he said quietly, "it is very late and you must lie down."

She made no protest as he led her away, and when he left her at her own door without a word or a glance she still accepted it without question. Something of his own granite fortitude she felt had entered into her.

But when he was gone she flung herself face downward upon the bed. Nothing, she knew, would ever be quite the same again, and yet——! She recalled his voice when he had said: "Why do you ask? You know. I told you I had no wife." She saw his face as it had been earlier that night in the garden; she saw it again, when, wrung from him by her helplessness and her belief that he was still man in spite of that iron will, he had confessed, in surrender: "No, I could not!"

And at that last memory Celeste de Lavarolle slipped to her knees, but her face was still buried in the bed as if she could not bear that even the Maker of love itself should see.

"Dear God," she whispered, "dear God, how good you are—to me!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE DECISION

Du MARSILLAC returned to the library with quick steps. The ordeal before him would be none the easier if postponed, and he knew that Franz would be waiting impatiently. Yet he was not quite prepared to see De Beaurepeau seated at a table, his face buried on his crossed arms, his whole attitude one of complete dejection, for there had been nothing of this in the angry-browed man he had left in the room, who had watched him go with ill-concealed rebellion.

De Beaurepeau did not look up even when the duke had paced the room several times, and for some minutes both men evidently found speech impossible. But when the minutes had multiplied into a long silence, Du Marsillac, still pacing the floor, wishing devoutly that Franz would return to his earlier recrimination if a basis for settlement could be found in no other way, glanced at the silent figure, and something in the hopelessness of the attitude stung the duke to speech.

"Well?" he said quickly, halting in his stride.

No answer.

"If you have nothing to say to me I must go," he continued. "Neither you nor I are in tune for sane discussion now, nor wise enough to foresee the end of it all. To-morrow will bring a new point of view perhaps."

"Never to me," said De Beaurepeau suddenly, but without lifting his head.

At the words the impatience of Du Marsillac was again in arms, and he turned toward the door.

"Then, good-night "

He knew that he must get away, alone, somewhere—anywhere—out in the open where he could fight the thing out. The wind that had increased to a gale beckoned him, now no longer an alien, but a part of itself, a creature that understood what it meant to struggle, and fight forward against all opposition, against all adversaries, wrestling, plunging, tearing on—and on—and on!

But at the very door Franz's voice stopped him.

"What do you propose to do?"

The duke turned, with that desire for escape still drawing him and cutting the answer into groups of chopped-off words.

"Do? What we've tried to do. Find a vessel—and se it."

"When?"

The single syllable tied them both to a practical problem, and the duke, recognizing it, came slowly back.

"A man promised to bring me word to-morrow, but so many have promised and failed."

De Beaurepeau raised his head. "I thought you owned several vessels," he said accusingly.

"Confiscated for transports," explained the duke briefly.

De Beaurepeau seemed to be turning the problem over, as if this phase of it had not struck him before.

"When would be the earliest possible time that we could leave if he were successful?"

"About dusk to-morrow—no, to-day, for it's past one o'clock. Is there anything more?"

"Yes, much more." But Franz waited again, evidently

arranging his words for a strength that would carry conviction, yet when he spoke at last his listener was in no way prepared for the suddenness of his proposition. "You must give me your promise before you leave her to-night that you will not see mademoiselle again save in case of extreme necessity, and that you will not speak to her until I give permission."

"Are you positively insane?" demanded the duke.

"Perhaps. Certainly I am most determined. She has given me the right—you heard her yours. If to-night and for her sake I want your pledge that you will see in no smallest way to upset her determination."

The duke laughed, a short, mirthless, bitter laugh.

"If a horse will not stand, tie him, and beat him into submission, I suppose?"

Franz met his eye firmly. "You refuse?"

"Certainly I refuse. To ask such a thing is an insult."

A smile of bitter appreciation dawned in De Beaurepeau's eyes.

"An insult to you—or to her—or to me?" he said.

The duke recommenced his pacing.

"Why do we stay here to say things that are like daggers and as useless as daggers to meet the question?" he said.

"Because you have taken the kernel from my corn," cried Franz quickly, "and it takes a dagger sometimes to bring a man's sin home to him. But I am as well away from you as you that words are useless things when a man's will is set against them. Having taken my corn, then, will you agree to desist from sweeping away the husks you have still left me?"

The duke came slowly back, to stand, looking down upon him.

"What you ask seems perilously close to barter and sale. If I will stand aside you will grant me absolution as a friend. Well, plainly then, I refuse. I do not know yet what I shall do—for I am not at all sure what is best for her, but this certainly: I will not discuss the matter with you farther to-night. I am going out—to think things over. Good-night."

"Wait."

"No."

"Yes—positively—you must. Not because I ask, for another reason. If you are not sure what is best for her, I am master now; for whatever your preference may be—or mine—I feel full sure that I hold the key to what is absolutely best."

The duke stopped, waiting, but he did not turn, and Franz moistened his lips, as if the hardest part of the ordeal were still before him.

"God knows that I am not seeking to pry into your heart for curiosity. I ask because I must—for her. Do you love this woman as I love her? What sacrifice are you willing to make for her? Since, after all, sacrifice is the one infallible test of love."

"What is my love to you?" demanded the duke, whirling about upon him, with quick bitterness. "You hold her promise which you propose to force her to keep. What can my love or my sacrifice be to you?"

"Her promise? Her dead self! Husks, dry husks!" cried Franz in a voice far more bitter than the duke's own. Then, as if maddened into the man he had been in the earlier evening, he went on: "And what were

my love and my suffering to you when you took away from me all that made the husks a living, loving woman?"

For the length of a breath the duke looked at him strangely. Then, unexpectedly, he broke into full speech, as silent, strong natures speak lavishly when once they have flung themselves over a barrier.

"You ask me to tell you what she means to me! How can any man tear his heart into shreds and hold it up, a spectacle for another? I loved her before I had known her a single hour. She was instantly the one woman I had waited for through all the years. The struggle began before we had reached the gate. Her heroism—her pride—her defiance—her care only for honor and the things that honor gives! You know them—you know her! And from the very first I was a straw in a whirlpool—turning everywhere for an escape—for were you not always there behind me with your trust in me? And a hundred times a day I went mad, and fought only to keep a steady head while my heart was pounding. God!" He raised his face, as a wild thing smells the forest, long withheld. "And each moment I knew that she, so fearless, so helpless, depended upon what I could do! And life grew full of meaning, of new strength, of new endeavors. I thanked God with every breath I drew that I could spend it in her service. Yet, until to-night, my tongue was at my command and she knew nothing of this from me, for I never closed my eyes at night, I never opened them in the morning save to remind myself that she was pledged to you—that I was only your deputy—that I would never have looked upon her face had I not been called to the service of her

rescue by you. And every day while I live I shall thank God for the joy of that service. When the time comes for the parting, I shall come back here and live somehow, remember those priceless days which I had never known but for you. Be sure I shall remember that! Whatever part will be mine then—which is not for you or me even to think now!—be sure that I shall never forget that I have more than other men, having known her! You call your part husks? Husks! And I would give my soul and be glad, if even those husks were mine and I could take them honestly!"

He was gone, his quick steps sounding in the hall, his voice still ringing in the ears of the man left behind.

De Beaurepeau sat perfectly still, his elbow resting on the table, his chin in his hand and his eyes on that empty doorway, while the clock ticked its way wholly around the circle. Its chime on the hour, musically loud in the silence, roused him. He moved with deliberation and without haste, drawing something from his breast that he laid upon the table, a thing of ivory and polished steel.

But when it was there he went back to the old attitude of staring attention fixed on a space that was peopled with memories. Occasionally as the night waned he took up that shining thing quietly and looked at it, very much as a prisoner looks at the locked gates that have freedom on the farther side. But though he held it long many times, always he laid it down softly, to return to that unwinking stare across the room.

At last, when the black square of the window had grown first gray and then a soft, luminous pink, steps were returning along the hall, and De Beaurepeau looked up, only half aroused, as the duke entered.

Du Marsillac nodded curtly, quite as if he had expected to find the other there, and without a word dropped into a chair. He appeared weary to exhaustion. His hair lay damp and close on his forehead; his boots were heavy with mire and the scanty light showed his face pinched and gray. Neither spoke. The window that looked east turned salmon yellow, lemon yellow, and white. The day was fully come. Then, quite suddenly, without rising, the duke reached over and, with a quick sweep, caught the pistol from the table.

"Pretty little thing," he said, turning it over and over, as if the workmanship alone engrossed his attention. "A keepsake? Your father's?"

De Beaurepeau smiled quietly as he rose.

"Do not be afraid," he said. "I shall not use it—or any other. The time when that sort of thing was a temptation is over and gone. Keep it if you like—if you fear to trust me. Escape by that way is out of the question and I know it. I had it here for company while I thought it all out—though from the very beginning I knew that I could not escape that way, knowing what her scorn would be afterward. But it was company through the hours." He stood looking down upon the thing in the duke's hand as one parts from a companion who is bound on another road. "You remember she said: 'Death seems so easy and so little, sometimes.' A woman sees things so accurately, so instinctively, things that a man has to work out inch by inch—I mean a woman like that." The duke looked up at him curiously, for the years that he had known him had never taught Du Marsillac the other's exact view-point. But Franz went on as if he had not seen the duke's upward

glance. "One learns a good deal by suffering the thing oneself—and she has learned so much lately."

"You are quite sure you want me to keep this?" the duke asked him.

"Yes, for my need for it is over, and the temptation could not touch me again—any more than it could influence you. Stay, were you ever really tempted to do a weak thing? You and strength, instant strength, have seemed inseparable as long back as I can remember. But some time, when you are least prepared, the sudden temptation may come. Keep it against that time, to remind you how another man overcame his weakness here, when a woman had shown him the way." Then, with a glance at the window, Franz went on: "And you have been walking all these hours: how much easier it always is to fight to a finish out-of-doors!"

The duke nodded shortly. It was evident that he did not care to recall or to dwell on what those hours had been. Instead he said:

"I met the man I mentioned. He has the boat and will have it ready at ten to-night. You will find everything arranged for you."

"But you must go too," and De Beaurepeau's accent promised pressure.

Du Marsillac met his eyes. "I thought you preferred that I remain here?"

Franz turned toward the white hearth. "That was before——" His voice dropped as if severed by that recalled experience of the lonely hours.

The duke did not answer at once; he went over to the hearth and, stooping, drew the ashes into a heap, before he was ready for a reply.

"Very well. Whatever you think best," he agreed. "For when mademoiselle sails I shall have done all that I can."

"I want you to go. It seems only just that you should finish the task to the end, as we planned that night in Paris."

"Very well. There may be trouble in landing, and, as you say, I should like to see the thing through to the end. I can return in the same vessel."

Franz looked at him with freshened interest. "You think there are spies about?"

"I know."

"On what grounds?"

"Brouillon has been seen in the village. Several of the older men remembered him. He was brought up under this roof."

"Ah, yes; I had forgotten," returned Franz dully.

"There's life in the coals yet if we can only find it," the duke said, still busy with the embers.

"Yes, for coals are like hearts, I suppose," said Franz, thinking aloud. "There's always warmth in them as long as they lie close to other coals; but nothing can bring the ashes back to life when only white, dead dust is there in place of the old-time glow."

The duke stood up as if the words had touched him too close for comfort.

"Let us go to our rooms," he proposed. "The servants will be about soon and we do not want them to find us here like this," and he looked down at his own disordered dress.

Franz turned obediently, but he limped as he crossed the floor; seeing which, the duke offered quietly: "May I give you an arm up?"

But at the offer Franz drew back, and an unloosed fury flamed in his face.

"No! I would to God I need never accept anything from you—not so much as a glance! For I am not blind, and I know whatsoever I have of her, even so much as one of her thoughts, I must take with the understanding that you are first. You have but to speak—but to look—good God! Did I not see?—and all her promises, all her intentions and pledges would be flung to the winds without a second's hesitation and she would follow you to the farthest hell and call it happiness!"

The answer of the duke came leaping in quick return, with a bitterness quite as keen as that Franz had used.

"Why do you say these things? Does it make it any easier for you to know that I have heard? Is it any easier for me to hold back that word, that look, having heard what you imagine? Words only make the necessity the more hideous. God above have mercy on all three when the time comes!"

He began his pacing again, up and down, in a white heat of rebellion that nevertheless held the man himself sane and clear-sighted. As he turned to come back the second time, Franz met his eyes and at once the duke broke into speech again.

"We have no right, you and I, to stand here telling one another what each desires, or what each would do if his hands were not tied. That is not the question at all. We have only the problem: What is best for—her."

Franz continued to look at him. "You consider then that you have found a solution?"

"She has given you her word," Du Marsillac said slowly.

Strangely enough a smile dawned on De Beurepeau's face as he heard that, a smile that was like the memory of a far-away and shadowy past, full of a happiness that could never return. His glance wandered from the duke and stopped when it rested on the dead ashes. But the smile was still there when he inquired calmly :

"So you propose to withdraw?"

Twice again the duke measured the length of the room before he answered, and then the words came in a flood, hotly, swiftly, etching his mental storm upon the consciousness of the other with an acid that cut deep.

"What else is left? She has pledged herself to you and I can serve her in no other way now save to make it as easy as possible for her to keep that pledge. I will find my comfort in proving, what she knows without any need for proof, that her word is more to me than happiness. She would tolerate no future, and no more could I, with a broken promise tarnishing every day's sun for us. Call it withdrawing, if you like; she will know what it is and I have no fear that she will misunderstand. So when to-night comes I shall be ready to do the uttermost, and I shall not flinch nor cry out even at the end. A man does not make a scene when he tears out his heart. That is the thing for people in books—bloodless, spineless things. But until to-night I do not want to see your face—as you will thank me to keep mine from you. The boat will lie in a cove just this side Calais; Louis will take you there. I arranged with the captain to send all those who will sail in small parties, so better to escape if spies are about."

He had reached the door again, his long strides covering the short distance fast, but on the threshold he turned,

and, after the hesitation of an instant, came back, the line of his jaw a hint more grim than it had seemed before.

"You have asked me to go with you to-night—and it is so settled. But to-morrow, if we see England, there will be no time to think of—of other things. We have been friends. I should like to remember in the days to come that we still were able to shake hands—at the last."

He offered his own, and Franz laid his in it; but it was the duke's grip that held them both fast for the drawing of a single breath. They fell apart, and without a word from either man, without a glance of the eyes of either into the eyes of the other, the duke turned quickly, and was gone.

For a long space Franz stood where he was, looking at the empty doorway, as if the vivid personality of the other could not possibly pass out of touch in so inconsiderable a time.

"How could a woman fail to love one so strong—so mercilessly strong?" he asked the empty air.

CHAPTER XVIII

THEY THAT GO DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

ALTHOUGH De Beaurepeau went stumblingly to his rooms at last he did not lie down. For long hours he moved about the place, touching a book here, a trifle there, turning an empty face to the servants who came from time to time to mend the fire or to bring him a tray with food and coffee. Each time he accepted the service with a nod, but after they were gone he seemed to forget that they had been, and the tray stayed untouched until the next meal hour brought another tray to go, like its predecessor, untasted.

Once, about noon, De Martignon sent word that he was going and would like to speak with Franz, but the count shook his head.

"Tell him another time," he said, with some show of decision. And when the servant reminded him hesitatingly that the marquis would not return, De Beaurepeau repeated: "No, no, another time. Tell him I have had a bad night and I will see and thank him in Paris."

During the afternoon he seemed to come to a resolution, and going to the desk he wrote steadily, without a stop from start to finish, something that he afterward folded and sealed before he slipped it into his pocket with an air of finality, as if something had been accomplished that nothing now could undo.

Darkness brought sounds from the courtyard, as if various parties were mounting and departing, but he made no effort to so much as look from his window, although it commanded the avenue. After some time came Louis to say that all was ready, that all others had gone; and the Count de Beaurepeau followed him as docilely as a hound that has been trained to follow at heel. He asked no questions, and Louis, never voluble, made a companion that suited his mood.

The duke, on the other hand, had spent a day of feverish activity, arranging for the departure, and foreseeing every possible complication. When night came he sent the *curé* forward with Leon and a couple of others, as vanguard; he followed next with mademoiselle and Susanne, and a couple of trusty lads a hundred paces behind; last of all Louis and De Beaurepeau were to bring up the rear.

The vessel lay, as had been promised, in the little cove, and access to it was made by a cockle-shell boat, pulled from shore to ship by a couple of Brittany lads. The moon, within a night of its full, would be well up at nine o'clock, and every moment after that meant greater danger.

When the duke had settled mademoiselle and Susanne safely on deck he went aft to see what had become of the others. He found the *curé* at the rail, looking with streaming eyes on the shore he had quitted.

"If I could only be sure it was right to leave my poor little ones," he said. "No one to show them the way, and it seems so like desertion."

"But if they would not listen?" returned the duke, groping vaguely for some comfort for this childlike pu-

city of conscience. "If the time ever comes when I will receive you again, you shall go to them, I will do it."

"But I was so happy at Marsillac, for there I did some service," persisted the *curé*. "Why could I not stay there?"

"Because I cannot be sure of what any day may bring forth and I have no right to endanger others in my absence if I am taken," returned the duke. "Besides I must be called away to the other estates."

"Promise me that if you ever go back to Marsillac, you will take me," pleaded the *curé*.

Du Marsillac looked at him testingly. "That is not to come to-morrow," he said, "and who then will I take to Mademoiselle de Lavarolle in England?"

The *curé* relinquished his pleading, but his voice showed a new resolution as he said: "I will stay with me and Mademoiselle as long as she needs me, but then I will be called away to go with you, and I shall count each day one month of service toward the service I love most of all for the helpless ones who suffer because they cannot see."

"Very well, it is a bond," agreed the duke, and he had taken a step away when the *curé* touched his sleeve.

"What is this whisper I have heard to-day about Mademoiselle's marriage to the Count de Beaurepeau?"

"How did you hear?" demanded Du Marsillac quickly.

"Susanne had it from the countess. She discovered that mademoiselle had not been in bed all night and she came to me to make sure that her idol was not coerced in any way. She has threatened all sorts of punishments for me personally if I tie any knot that mademoiselle

does not want tied," and the *curé* smiled, remembering his recent interview.

Monsieur turned his face away, but his voice was perfectly level as he said: "It is quite true. De Beaurepeau intends to marry the countess as soon as possible after reaching England, for we—we both consider that it will be much better that she have a lawful protector."

"And mademoiselle agrees?" persisted the *curé*.

The duke still did not meet the other's eyes. "Mademoiselle agrees," he repeated.

"Ah, well," said the *curé* with a smothered sigh, "how little we can see sometimes after all. Do you know I liked to fancy that ——"

"Listen! What's that? Surely we are getting under way," cried the duke, and hearing the men at the capstan he started forward impetuously.

"Are all aboard? You are sure?" he demanded of the captain.

"Every one accounted for," returned the skipper, and strode a step aside to hurl a string of muttered oaths and orders upon the crew.

"Ah, at last!" breathed the duke, as the little vessel slipped quietly from her moorings and, catching the light breeze, stood out boldly into the channel.

Some minutes later he mounted to the deck where Susanne was arguing with mademoiselle as to the advisability of wraps.

"It's so warm," pleaded the countess, well knowing the uselessness of argument with Susanne, however.

"It'll be cold enough by and by," maintained the Amazon, tucking a rug about her. "Here is the citizen-soldier; he'll tell you fast enough that you must be

warm," applying for confirmation to the source usually brought submission, she had observed.

"And where is thy own cloak, Susanne?" he inquired, carrying rout and disorder into the enemy's ranks.

"I? Nonsense. I am used to the cold and an ice-cold could sleep out-of-doors to-night," she cried loudly, then, as mademoiselle laughed, she hurried away.

A pause; then mademoiselle said hastily, as if she dared not permit a silence: "How good she is, the hearted Susanne."

No answer. The duke was looking across the water toward the land slipping so fast astern.

Mademoiselle tried again. "How big the moon looks to-night, but those clouds fly across it as if they were envious of its brightness. I wonder if that same queen-moon looks down on suffering Paris and her children. And I wonder if it can see Rosalie and the big Pieter. Ah, did I tell you that the *curé* married them before he left that night?"

"Rosalie could not find a stouter heart anywhere to mate with," commented the duke; but he appeared only half awake to the happiness of Rosalie and Pieter. He had turned and was staring now past the countess into the dark corner behind her. Silence was growing again, and she made another effort.

"How long did the captain think it would take to cross? When the moon is low will we—ah, what is that?"

For without a word or sound, her companion had reached forth a swift hand and had dragged a heap of clothing from the corner.

"So we cannot sail without the elect, it would appear," observed the duke, and shook the thing in his hand.

snarl came from it; then the sound of torn linen and wrenched wool, and the mass stood up, freed from that strong hand.

"The time is past when a man can be made into a beast to be hauled about at the pleasure of a tyrant," muttered Brouillon, shaking himself into some sort of order.

"Quite right," acceded the duke with a grim tranquillity. "The time is fully past—for that and for many things."

Brouillon shuffled his feet. The moonlight shone white on his face, painting it a ghastly color. He kept his hands tight closed on one another and, as he answered or spoke from time to time, he twisted those hands as if he held some tortured thing imprisoned there. Mademoiselle, watching, standing with her own hands tight clasped, fancied that it was his own soul he held there, snared by the trap he had laid for others, now struggling to bite before it went out.

"Well, well, what will you have?" demanded Brouillon. "Say what you want and have done quickly. I will take a boat and go back," but his voice held the faintest trace of unsteadiness for all its bravado.

"You propose to return in order to achieve new honors? Such a course would be so reasonable for me," commented the duke.

"You cannot detain me here if I prefer to go," argued Brouillon. "I have done nothing against the state."

"Perhaps I cannot: that remains to be proved," but the amiability of Du Marsillac did not sound conducive to experiments on the part of the other. Brouillon turned his blanched face toward the shore.

"Say quickly what you will have. Delay is useless. I am too good a son of the Republic to pass without full accounting with her afterward."

"Yes, but afterward," repeated the duke, and Brouillon started, though he tried to conceal it the next moment.

"And I am too honest a patriot to be aught but positive whatever men may say," he cried. "Give me your terms quickly—the shore every moment grows farther away—it will be a good pull now," and he looked very much as if he wished its friendly soil were that minute beneath his feet.

The duke surveyed him with a dawning surprise. "It is not possible you wish me to believe that you have ventured here alone?" he suggested.

Brouillon, quick to perceive any loophole, assumed a voice of confidence.

"Certainly not. I have the whole crew in my hands, and when we reach the other side there are legions to my bidding. Therefore wholly safe, I determined to cross."

"Certainly. All of which is beautifully simple and inexact, for the two men found among the crew were slow to admit that the plans were to take us at the moment before we sailed, and their escape, and incidentally that of their chief, had been cut off most unexpectedly. I'll give the rogues credit; they seemed more disturbed in regard to your fate than to their own when the captain ironed them."

Brouillon's face turned a shade more ashen and his twisting hands gripped one another hard.

"Monsieur the duke is of greater discernment than I had fancied," he said, and the title slipped from his

as if he had never known another for the man before him. "But of course he knows that a man would not trust his hand between the jaws of a lion and hope afterward to have the use of the hand for himself. Therefore he knows that I have plenty of assistance at hand when I have need for it."

"Which is most fortunate, since much may happen between shore and shore," the duke reminded him casually.

Brouillon crushed his lip under tight teeth. "Much, but not murder," he said after a moment, and confidently.

"Is it counted murder when a poisonous thing is wiped out of existence?" inquired the duke with deadly calmness.

"You dare not—you cannot!" shrieked Brouillon suddenly, shrilly. "You tyrants strike and cripple little children!" with a touch on his own knee, "but you balk at cold murder. You who talk so much of fairness, of equal weapons,—ah, you dare not for your own honor's sake murder me here—defenseless."

"And you count upon my honor and my birth, both the things you have hitherto most despised, most misunderstood; yet these are your defense when death comes near, a death far less awful than the death you have planned and accomplished for others!" Now the speaker's calm broke a little for the first time.

Brouillon winced perceptibly. "The Committee would not permit——"

"The Committee? Out here on neutral waters?" interrupted Du Marsillac. "What accounting do I owe the Committee? Would it hesitate to snuff out my life without waiting to hear plea or justification? No. Here I, the Duke du Marsillac, I alone shall say what is to be."

Brouillon looked about wildly. "Ah, do not forget the years that I spent in service for your house! Nearly thirty long years I toiled for your father, day and night gathering his rents——"

"And incidentally appropriating as much for yourself as could not be easily detected," interrupted the duke again. "Do you think that the books and the years afterward have told no tales?" He surveyed the other curiously. "What I cannot understand is why you should trust yourself here, with but two companions. Your cleverness promised better than that."

Brouillon hesitated, but something in the eye of the duke hastened his speech.

"The others—every soul I tried—blundered, not once but every time. Sometimes, like that fool Banque, when he had his grip on your very throat——!" and for a moment the fury of his disappointment and hatred flashed in his face. The one passion of a man's life cannot always hide its head at command. "I knew that I must come myself. I could not be sure that this was the vessel you had taken until I saw you come aboard, and that you had greater numbers than I had fancied and my vessel ashore was cut off. I could afford to hide and wait on the other shore, where my spies are like ants in numbers," and he assumed a temporary confidence, but with an eye cast slantwise on the face of his adversary. "The men below were to give a signal. When it did not come and I saw that we were under way, I knew something had gone amiss. I crawled here"—and he waited a brief second before he added: "I knew then that if my cleverness were not of avail I could still depend on your mercy for one helpless and defenseless."

The duke laughed drily. "The same mercy you have given us, for instance? The mercy you fashioned during the long years when my father gave you the best he had: food, shelter, tutors, everything equal to that of his own son? And what was his offense against you? His coachman, one of your own caste, had unfortunately crippled you—through an accident. That accident was no more of my father's making than of your father's, yet for years he gave all that money and time and care could do to right that injury. And what did you give in return? You tried to sow dissension among his people; you left no stone unturned to lay at his door every iniquity your own heart had devised. I have proof that during those uncertain days when the fate of France was in the balance you were playing into the hand of both people and king, prepared to jump into the service of Louis when the *Feuillants* thought you most safe."

"It is a lie—a most infamous lie!" screamed Brouillon, beside himself in his hideous rage.

"But I can prove it," retorted the duke. "The *curé* who is on this vessel to-night was in the confidence of the woman who took your letter to the sister of the king,—ah, I do not need to say another word. Your own face proves it most of all!"

"And you think you will live to prove it—tyrant—accursed oppressor—maimer of little children!" Brouillon beat his breast in his fury, so lost in the mastery of his passion that he was hardly able to articulate. "Once I thought I should be content to see your head on a pole, or trampled underfoot in the mire with the heel your father shortened for me," and he swung his foot viciously; "but that was in the old days, before I had

learned how to balance our accounts." So savage he was, so abandoned, so furious, with bloodshot eyes and snarling mouth, that the human element in him was lost and he appeared only a brute with the cunning of a man to make it more horrible.

"That night in the hut of that fool, Susanne, I saw a different way. I would strike where the heart lay and destroy it by inches! I would make the girl suffer to the last fraction of her endurance—ah, touched now at last, at last!" He shouted in an ecstasy of bloodthirst. "The furies would keep me alive if all else failed, would let me know to the full this vengeance that I have spent my life to take. You, with all the power in the world, cannot deprive me of life until, shrieking, this woman shall spend her last breath in vain calling upon you for the help that you cannot give, you who, bound and helpless, must see her every wrench, every pang—ah, I cannot die until that time is come! And will not the leg be paid for then?"

"Ah! The very light of day would turn black if God did not strike you out of life," cried the duke, his iron calm swept aside in a blinding flash of passion. "Here, captain!"

"No, never—never will I be taken!" shrieked Brouillon and flung himself forward, knife in hand, upon the duke. The force of his attack, prepared though the duke was, nevertheless drove Du Marsillac back upon the side of the low cabin, where, in a smother of blows, of hissing breath and the straining grip of taut muscles, both men fought for life.

Mademoiselle's sharp cry and the noise of the struggle had brought others, others who shouted and sought to

clutch at the writhing bodies, but who feared to strike the master by a blow delivered in the shadow where those two frenzied beings fought savagely.

But in a breath Susanne was standing in the companionway, and, seeing her, mademoiselle cried: "Susanne! Susanne! He is killing monsieur!"

Susanne's answering shout was like the answer of an ancient man-at-arms when his lord was in distress, so deep it was, so loud above all other sounds, so instantaneous. In a single stride Susanne had forced her way half through that crowd and like a thunderbolt she descended upon the wrestlers. A flash of lightning could not have been swifter than her arms that, without seemingly awaiting opportunity, gripped Brouillon, and, fastening upon him, literally tore him from his antagonist.

Now the conflict became general, for eager hands were stretched out to tear at the victim in Susanne's grasp, to strike him, to help hold him, for he was like a serpent in agility; turning, twisting, sidling now this way, now that, kicking, biting, scratching, snarling oaths, shrieking curses, a hideous human thing gone mad. A dozen times Susanne lost her hold, only to grip him again, but at the last he stood at bay at the very rail, with savage eyes that showed red in the white moonlight. All about him they were raging and he was holding them off, until his foot slipped, and with a shriek his voice rose in a shuddering plea. Turning, for a single moment, he had seen the water flowing away from the ship in a long white line—but black in fearful menace almost beneath his feet.

"Oh, mercy, mercy! The water ——!"

Afterward some leaned far over to peer into the black-

ness beneath the keel, and some claimed to have seen
head astern in the wide silver path of the moonlight,
Susanne stood back a step from the rail and lifted
arm like a prophetess :

"False patriot! False friend! Go where you
hope to find a mercy not like the mercy you have given
others! Go ask God to judge you now!"

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CHAPTER XIX

THE COMING OF THE DAWN

"Is your grace hurt?" demanded Louis anxiously, at the duke's side.

"No. A mere scratch," answered the duke, but he was still breathless from his recent conflict.

"That was an ugly knife, and there was an ugly heart behind it," and the face of the faithful fellow still wore its anxiety. "He was like a demon, that man—no, like a snake, so adroit, so slippery."

Mademoiselle lifted her head from her knees, for, from the moment Susanne had appeared in answer to her cry, she had hidden her eyes. But now, with something in her face that she did not know was there, a repetition of the look she had turned on Franz the night before when he had convinced her that her future was bound to his own, she spoke with a simplicity that was like a confession.

"I could not have lived—if he had killed you," she said.

The duke, moving swiftly across the little space that lay between them, came to a stand beside her and stood looking down wordlessly. Louis shuffled his feet uneasily, and Du Marsillac, remembering his presence, turned with a question.

"Where is the Count de Beaurepeau?" he asked.

Louis's uneasiness increased, and he looked for a mo-

ment very much as if he wanted to run away. The duke eyed him with growing surprise, and after another pause repeated his question, sharply.

"Your grace, I—I—hardly know how to tell," began Louis. "I told him it would be very hard to make either you or mademoiselle understand; and I told him that I was responsible for his safety, but he would listen to nothing at all. Moreover, he pointed out that it was not for one of my place to dictate to him his path, and ——"

"You cannot mean that he is not here?" cried the duke.

"Nothing would induce him to come beyond the second village; I do not know its name. He told me to tell your grace that he was returning to the Guard; and for the countess, he made me promise to deliver this letter into her own hands," and Louis drew from his coat a sealed paper.

"Gone? Impossible!" cried the duke, incredulous, and mademoiselle's fingers trembled as she broke the seal.

"But—I do not understand," she said.

"A light—quickly," commanded Du Marsillac, and at a moment Louis had returned with a ship's lantern, a bright orange point in the whiteness of the moon. Then, accepting the light, the duke held it up, dismissing Louis with a nod.

Yet mademoiselle did not at once open the paper. She looked about her in hesitation and appealed finally to the man beside her, as if he could give her courage.

"I—I believe I am afraid," she explained. "Every moment brings something new and dreadful. What should Franz turn back—now? Last night he said ——"

but the memory of the night before was still too keen, and she stopped.

Du Marsillac offered no solution, but she saw that his eyes were like sparks of impatience. Very slowly at last she opened the paper. She cast a glance over its contents, and then she turned with a low cry.

"This is meant for you too," she said.

He leaned over, reading with her :

"BEST BELOVED :

"I am going back to serve France, praying that she will let me die for her speedily, proving my faithfulness. There is no need that I prove for you my love and devotion, for such things need no guarantee. Yet I like to think that in just this way you will be able to measure best what I am glad to do, and that in the years to come you will hold your happiness from me."

Mademoiselle dropped the hand that held the paper and again from her lips slipped that moaning cry. Across the sea shimmering rainbows were whirling in the moonlit path. She moved so that the man beside her should not see her face, and then the shimmering mists stopped whirling, and were shot through with a clear light. But she did not draw away from him, only her shoulder was turned, and, as he lifted the lantern again, she raised the paper and together they read it through to the very end.

"Last night I was mad with pain and with a horrible fear that was greater than any other pain I had ever known. I said things that only a madman would say, for in reading your secret, oh, my best beloved, I read also what it meant for me. To-day I see clearly. I know now that I could no more hold you to that empty

contract than I could take your life, for what is life without love, which is its right and its meaning? I did plan to save you in the Place de la Concorde only to make you suffer a worse fate through all the years to come.

"And to-day, too, it is not hard for me to understand that my friend was not disloyal in loving you—how could he help it, having seen and known you? A man is blind and deaf and dumb because he serves in another place. Having a heart in his breast how could he stop its beating when you were near? To-day I can understand what his loyalty to me really was, and how he lived to it when his whole soul must have been fighting his love.

"And stranger still than all else, loving you as I do, with all that is in me, I can to-day understand how he was measuring men by what you would demand in one who could love, you, having known this one man, could love no other in the whole world. I can thank God humbly in spite of the pain, that He has given you a heart as strong as your own to mate with it.

"Yet I have not the courage to tell you this face to face. Just for a little time I could not look upon your joy unmoved, so selfish I am. But I can serve France, and I am going to her, hoping that she will receive again a son who, in service for her, will also find a way to save you.

FRANZ

Mademoiselle suddenly crushed the letter in her hand and leaned forward, as if her straining eyes would find him in the darkness and call him back.

"Franz, oh, Franz!" she cried softly. Pity for the sufferer overwhelmed at the moment all thought of herself, all thought even of this other man whose strong hand had laid its grip on her whole life.

She heard the lantern dropped to the deck and the sound brought to her an appreciation of what the letter

had given her—what was here now, this moment, waiting for her. She felt, rather than saw, the duke standing motionless behind her, and knew that she dared not look upon his face.

"Celeste!" he said at last, and his voice was as quiet as the great deeps of the sea, that nevertheless are strong beyond all tides and all storms. "Heart of my heart," he said.

She could not move. Happiness so maddeningly near, so beyond all price, was too exquisite to be taken instantly. She dared not reach out her hand, lest, like the glance of Jove, its brightness kill her.

"Celeste!" came the voice again, this time insistent, compelling. Then she heard him laugh softly, his voice trilled through and through with its happiness. "Are you afraid to trust love, now that it is our own—at last? Are you afraid to trust me?"

"No, no, a thousand times no! Only afraid that what is so precious cannot be real and will vanish when I try to grasp it," and turning, she found his waiting arms were like a safe haven after a shipwreck.

Yet it was long before they could look into the face of love quietly, for its light upon their faces was still of a dazzling brightness when the white moon was close to the western shore. As the night had advanced the light breeze had fallen with it, and when dawn came they were still in the same place, under a canvas that hung limp and silent, failing to draw. Through all those hours the same story was told over and over—or held to be revealed only through the eyes, lest a word, however exquisite, might soil it. And so spent, those hours became marvelously fleet of foot and could never be fully recalled by either,

save as a wide white line that lay across a dazzling a new path to unmeasured happiness.

Just before dawn the time came, as it has come every pair that ever mated, when the future thrust it upon them with its needed planning. It was the duke who brought it to speech first, men having a fashion always of wanting to tie their happiness to reality.

"When you are safe in the new land, dear heart," said, "and the *curé* has bound us together for always then I shall feel strong enough to leave you and return to my poor people to serve again in my place until Revolution is over. But when that day comes, I will come for you, beloved—ah, never fear for my lagging for no sails were ever bent that could carry me home enough!—and we will come back to France together to live forever—forever, beloved—for what could part us then? And we will forget all these grim days and remember only what all the days to come may bring.

She drew herself away from his arms a little, just enough to look into his face. "You mean—oh, I cannot believe that you mean to leave me in England while you return?" Her eyes, looking straight into his own, were dark with their passionate protest.

"Ah, do not tempt me! Do not look at me like that!" cried the duke in turn. "I must; don't you think that I must? My people have been given me that I must stand with them to the end; how could I desert them when they have been loyal all these years? Whether the king reigns or anarchy rules; whether they call me duke or citizen; whatever politics may decree in the name of the Committee; all that cannot alter the fact that my place is with my people. Even with you, dear

heart, life would be empty and bitter if I were not in my place dealing justly as I have light to see. Surely you who know what duty means so well, you who love honor better than happiness, you will understand and help me now?"

She stood up, loosening his hands wholly, her face glorified. "I understand so well that I should not deserve to be your wife if I attempted, by so much as a look, to hold you back. But still less should I deserve to share your name if I permitted you to do this thing alone. It is my right and my privilege as—as your wife—no, let me speak!—to stand at your side, to serve as you will serve. To-night, to-morrow, whenever you will the *curé* shall marry us—what matters where it is or how soon, so that he gives me the right to go with you wherever you go, to stand with you wherever you elect to stand. Is this not what marriage means?"

"But dear heart! How can I? The danger!" he murmured brokenly.

She turned, still with that transfigured look upon her face. "What would safety—what would life mean without you? Do you think I know any fear save just that: life without you to give it a meaning? Ah, do not deny me this! Brouillon can harm us never again and the strong arms in Marsillac will hold back all others. You are not afraid to trust your life to your people: will they be less loyal to—to the wife their lord—loves?"

Instantly his arms had caught her close, as if the last whispered words, halting and broken, were too supremely rare to be borne alone.

"You will marry me here—now? That is what you mean? You will turn back with England almost under

your feet and will face again the danger and the sacrifice that may still wait for us at home? Think, think—O brave little heart, think, and give me strength, for I am like a sponge that drinks in all that your great love gives. How can I take what every sign tells me is perilous—yet how can I turn away from what my whole body and soul are crying out to have—every fibre in me demanding?

She laughed softly. "'Are you afraid to trust love now that it is our own at last?'" she reminded him. "You may as well surrender, because you know that if you refuse I shall yet find a way to recross the channel and to walk barefoot, if need be, to stand with you. What other home in all the world does a man's wife have, save her place in his heart?"

His voice was like a cry of triumph as it rang through the little vessel, and at the summons men came running. He told them in simple words what he proposed to do, and after that second of incredulity, their shout went up to the very stars.

Then, silently, quietly, they waited, and stood bareheaded, that little knot of rough men, with Louis and Susanne, while the *curé* read the short service.

When it was over the *curé* turned a shining face backward across the waters. "God is so good," he said. "Who can understand the way of the Most High?"

In the east the dawn unfolded its colors, tenderly glowing as love itself, and quietly they dispersed, each to his task, until only the two were left alone with that shining light growing above the rim of the waters. The woman looked up with a great trustfulness into the face of the man, and in the silence and the great calm a new day was born.

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